SELF PUBLISHER!

★ MAGAZINE ★

Cover Feature

Monte Moore

On Breaking into Hollywood

Interviews

Dean Harris
Michael John Morris
Matt Forbeck
Steven Stonebreaker
Danny McMaughlin

Articles

The Fishbowl Chronicles
20 Questions
A Written Word

SNEAK PEEK!

Douglas Owen's SPEAR

Issue Number
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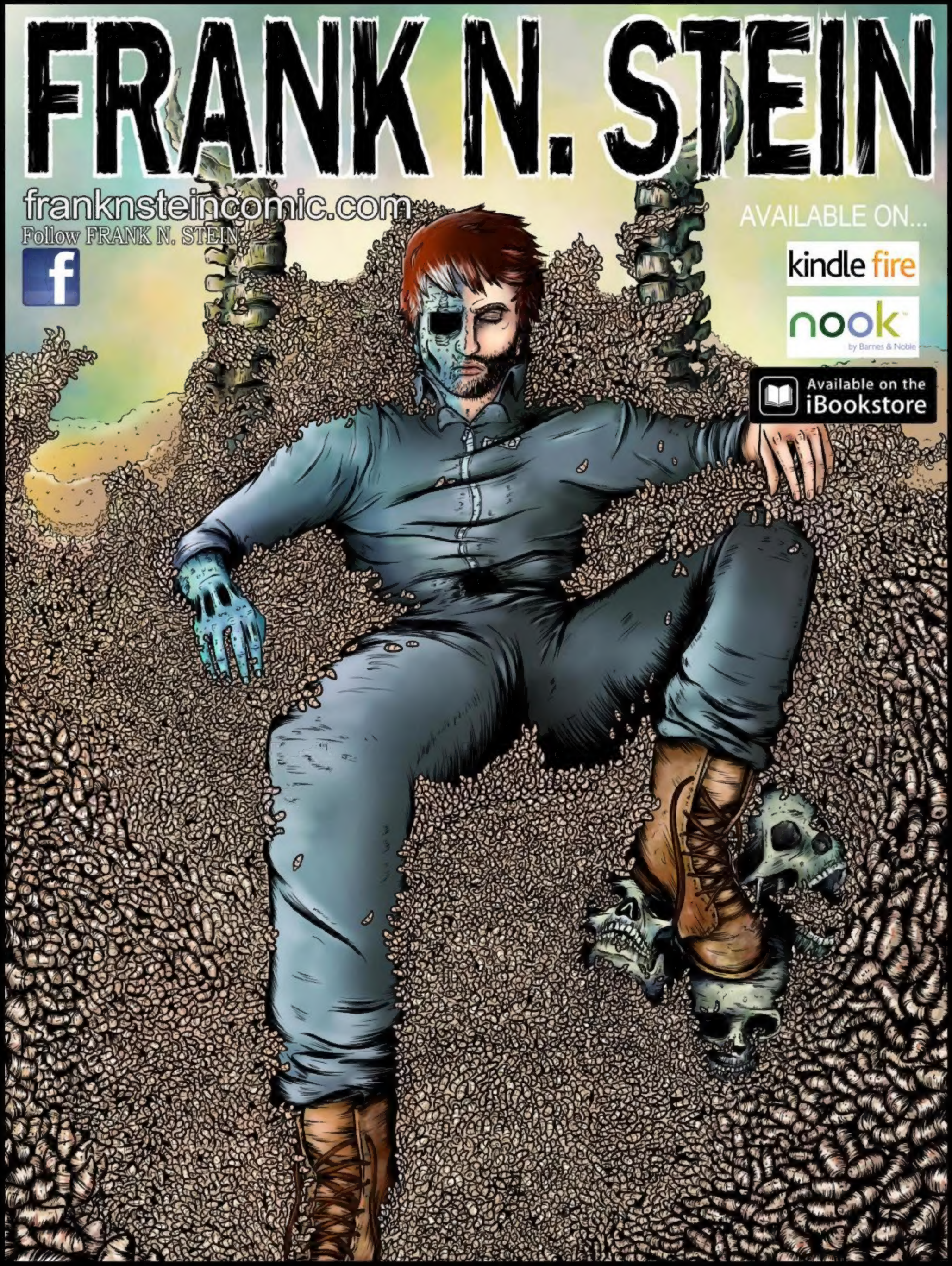

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Self Publisher! #66

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Whatever it takes... By Ian Shires

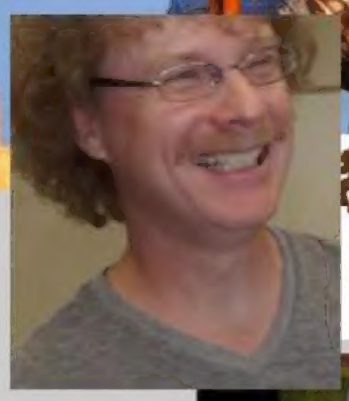
The successful completion of a project relies on the fortitude of the person who has set it in motion. Whether others are involved or not, without the grit and heart of knowing that in the end, there's going to be something to look at, nothing can be done. This issue, we say goodbye to good friend and colleague Jay Savage. Last issue's editorial I mentioned he was taking an issue off, but actually, he ended up doing last issue. Now, the tides of circumstance have caught up with us and Jay has to take a step back, and concentrate on Jay for a while. We're not sure if or when he'll return to the magazine. This issue was in his hands for over a month, and right now, as I write this, I am starting it over from scratch.

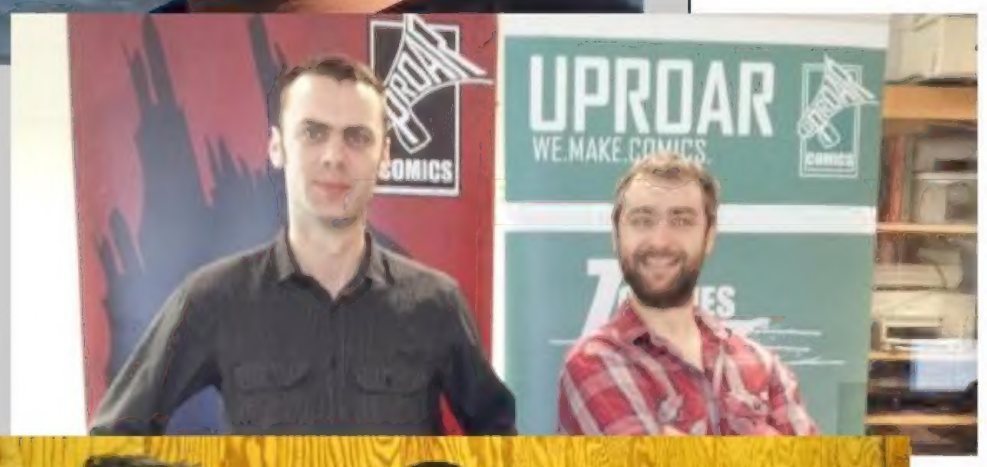
I'm not mad or upset, I have talked at length with Jay, and I know what's going on, and I've been through such things myself. I want everyone to wish him well as we go forward. I am looking over his designs as I set up new page templates, and I am trying to adopt a lot of the look he brought to us, as well as install some new thoughts and ideas. I think my plan for the future is going to include seeking out local community colleges, and developing an intern program where I can get new talent willing to learn, working on layouts for the magazine.

We've been doing a lot of rearranging and redevelopment with the Self Publisher Association. The SPA originally grew out of this magazine and I have always viewed it as a backbone to the rest of what is going on. We've really hit the international level hard now, with Mike Gagnon and Ben Slabak joining the official SPA Development team. Mike being in Canada, Ben being in Australia, we're working on things that affect publishers everywhere, while tapping directly into the grass roots of what Self Publishing is all about on local levels as well. To that end, we're in the process of redeveloping the www.spacomics.com website into the new home of the SPA, and moving all the publisher-specific tools over there, and clearing way to make the Self Publisher website, more focused on what fans of self publishing want: News, Reviews, Interviews.

And so, we've enlisted Ellen Fleischer, to serve as the News Editor at the website and we're starting to post up-to-the minute news releases there. We're starting to add some new reviewers to the mix and I'm trying to get books that I have waiting for reviews into the light of day. It's hard to keep it all together and going when everyone involved is a volunteer, but I have really been blessed to gain the support and effort of some truly talented people to make this work. As I dig into the files for this issue's articles, and then get this issue out to you, we are already gathering the materials for the next one and assigning people for articles for the one after that. My goal right now is to get us back onto a solid monthly track, which I know I can do. We're getting words of encouragement on a steady basis, for the work we are doing with this magazine, and the SPA, and that keeps our spirits high that it is all worth it. When just one new reader finds one new creator and becomes a fan for life...then that is what it's all about. It makes it all worth it. And I'll keep that hope alive, whatever it takes.

THANKS FOR READING!





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Monte M. Moore

On Breaking into Hollywood

Interviewed by Ian Shires

There is a natural connection between comics and movies: both are visual storytelling media. Small press publishers have a tougher road to the big screen than the mainstream. Marvel and DC are both now owned by big, big money companies... and the technology is now there to make comics come to life. Yet, there are hundreds of publishers out there wishing and hoping to become the next Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, the next Mask. And it's not an impossible road. It's just a very, very difficult one.

I've had the pleasure to meet Monte Moore, who is living the dream. Monte is a comic writer, who has made the jump to screenwriting. As I caught up with him for this interview, he was literally hopping a plane to Florence, Italy, for a large comic/media show, where he was set to hold a panel on Indie film-making. So, let's delve into our conversation and see how it went.

SP!: So from what I've gathered, you have some side-window strategies for getting into Hollywood. What can you tell us about that?

MM: Having been in the comics, gaming, and entertainment industries as an artist for nearly 20 years, I leverage my illustration skills as the 'tip' of my marketing 'spear,' so to speak. With a never-ending sea of writers and folk with the next killer Hollywood idea, I try to think of ways to set my scripts and concepts apart from the others. By creating a key visual, like a creature or spaceship, a movie poster mock-up, a character illustration or a specific scene, I can grab a producer's interest more easily than with just words. If George Lucas was a film school grad today, he might start out teasing someone about his unknown Star Wars project with a concept drawing of Darth Vader… and now you have their attention. Vader was actually drawn by a concept artist and not Lucas, but you can see my point.

thirty miles from nowhere . . . you'll find yourself at the . . .
END OF THE ROAD
Doug Jones
Danielle James
Michael Chandler
don't trust your own eyes
written and co-produced by Monte M. Moore

In addition to that, I use the internet fiercely to market my projects — from having my own website, where art and concept can be seen — to making a stand-alone website for each script. It might include a brief synopsis, a logline, some concept art, and some visual flair to capture the flavor of the concept. I also pay to post my scripts on a few reputable screenplay sites and I sign up for RSS feeds from script services that work with producers looking for scripts. When I see a call for scripts that fits something I have, I respond, and copy myself on the communication.

As a numbers game, be prepared to face countless rejections and non-responses from 99 percent of those you contact. Currently, I have over 2500 emails in my 'film' folder with communications and query letters. I try to approach every single query as the one that will open the next door. As I am writing this interview, I just got a request for one of my scripts. Maybe this will be the day another door is opened…

SP!: Brag a little! Tell us some of the motion picture projects you have completed,

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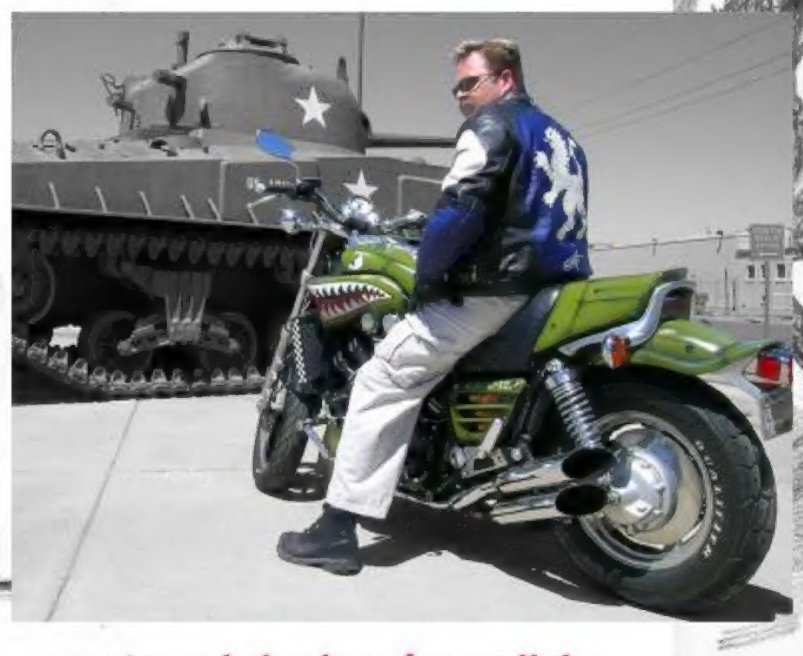

and what you have in the works.

MM: I started out with just some art, most notably, for the folks working on Men in Black II, who wanted some art for background décor. The scene the art was in never made it in the movie, so you can't see it on-screen. More recently, The Guild web series filled a room in the show with my artwork, including sculpture designs and posters. After my first outing to have a producer make a film from my script — which turned into a disaster — I decided to take matters into my own hands. Working with my friend Ace Underhill of Brilliant Screen Studios, we decided to make a film on the remote ranch I grew up on in Idaho. Strangely enough, it all went according to plan. I wrote the script, we raised the funds, shot the film and got it into distribution, and earned a nice collection of film festival awards to boot. The film, released under the title 1,2,3… Scream, includes sci-fi notables Doug Jones (Hellboy films, Legion, Pan's Labyrinth), Michael Dorn (StarTrek: TNG) and Robert Picardo (StarTrek: Voyager, Gremlins 2, Innerspace), and is currently available on ITUNES and other video on-demand portals.

The second project is called Screamplay and, as a found-footage horror, it has no notable actors, since that would defeat the purpose. That project I wrote, directed, produced, and executive produced.

Lastly, I executive produced and art directed on a Michael Madsen western called A Sierra Nevada Gunfight. That was a great experience, living on-set in the California Mountains for a month, surrounded by all the Western props we needed, and drinking by the campfire at night.

SP!: And yet, you started in comics. So tell us more about your roots and the comic work that honed you, all the way back to the first.

MM: Back in 1993, I was the colorist on a self-published comic called Lords. Although the title was not a success and came out when the comics industry was literally self-imploding due to too many titles, I still got a taste for the comics industry. It all started slowly with a few pin-ups and covers for small indie publishers. Then I moved up the food chain to bigger clients, as my artistic skills grew. I had a stack of rejection letters from everyone from Lucasfilm to DC Comics, but within a ten-year span, I had added every company who rejected me, to the 'client list'. All you really need is dedication and perseverance, in my opinion and, when you are ready, hopefully, good things will happen. Along the way, I did licensed work on Image titles, Chaos! Comics, and lots of sketch card projects for Marvel, Star Wars, and other great properties. In 1998, I went to a gaming convention and my skill set was ready for higher profile work on Dungeons and Dragons, which was being rereleased, Harry Potter, which was hotter than ever, and a host of indie publishers as well. Big or small, I've hardly ever turned down fair work offers, as long as the project was intriguing and the company was good to work with.

Although I've worked consistently in the gaming industry since 1998, I also co-own MYNDzei Games (pronounced Mind's Eye) with my partner, Shaun Cranford. He designs the games and I provide the visuals. Thus far, we have released Wench: The Thinking Drinking Game, featuring my tantalizing pin-up work, and Pirates of Gold Cove, which is a family-themed card game. So, much like comics and films, this is a self-publishing venture in another industry, but still all related to pop culture.

My career progression has been long, slow, and steadily upwards over 20 years, so no overnight successes for me — which I prefer. I'm still here, always working, always busy, and I've seen many overnight successes already burn out and disappear from the industry.

SP!: At your current career level, do you feel that there is room for others to do as you have done? At what point did you look at what you were doing and say, "I can make this jump, it is possible."?

MM: Certainly what I'm doing isn't magic or a secret. It's more common sense, a head for marketing, and dedication. The walls that block access to Hollywood, the video gaming industry, and comics are bigger than ever, but the bigger the walls, the bigger the holes in them…you just have to find your hole and worm your way in. It's easier for me to get attention for my writing based on my artistic client list, so I do what I can to leverage that — but it's certainly not necessary. Someone once told me 'there is always room at the top,' and I've taken that to heart. So, in my opinion, if your work is great, sooner or later, the cream will rise to the top.

SP!: How did the show in Italy go? Was this your first international jaunt?

MM: We had a blast in Italy at this first-year event called Florence Fantastic

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Fest. The fans in Europe are great: polite and supportive. I did several presentations, including an indie filmmaking discussion on my film End of the Road, and a 1.5-hour long airbrush demonstration, to an eager crowd. I love shows in Europe and my favorite is Lucca Comics and Games in Lucca, Italy. It's their version of our San Diego Comic Con International, but with the food, the fans, the location and the great Lucca Games Crew that volunteer their time to make you feel welcome, in my opinion, it's the best show in the world. I've done shows in Tokyo, London, Germany (six times), and Italy (six times). I use my work as excuse to travel the world, meet new fans, and see the best art the world has ever created.

SP!: From my seat running this magazine and the SPA, I am seeing internationalization of the publishing industry reach levels we only hoped to see 20 years ago when I wrote my first article on the subject. Is this making it easier, or harder, to reach an audience that can float a career?

MM: From my point of view, it's easier and harder at the same time. As a writer or artist, there is more competition than ever. I now compete with artists in Russia, China, and South America, so the talent pool is now global. The good part is that my clients are now all over the world as well, and I've created Playstation cover art for companies in Europe, and gaming art for clients in Poland. I license my images all over the world. But the right attitude to have isn't that *I* have to compete with them…but that *they* have to compete with *me*!

SP!: So, wrap this up for us. Any last words of advice? And, of course, tell everyone where they can see more of your work.

MM: Well, the advice is in my answers above. I believe in dedication and perseverance over any notion of 'raw talent,. Luck happens for those who are prepared… then you realize it wasn't luck at all. So, in the immortal words of Galaxy Quest, "Never Give Up… Never Surrender!" See more of my artwork, designs, and ramblings at:

www.mavarts.com

www.montemoore.com

www.myndzei.com
(gaming company I co-own)

www.maverickcustompaint.com
(custom motorcycle and vehicle paint).

And, to answer the question you didn't ask, but already may know the answer to. No… I don't sleep very much. I'll sleep when I'm dead. 'Til then, I'll just be doing my thing… which seems to be illustration… filmmaking… no, wait… screenwriting… no, wait… painting motorcycles... or making new games! Darn, can't decide. Guess I'll do it all.
- Monte

Caught in a Dizzy Whirl

A Chat with Dean Harris

Interviewed by: Ellen Fleischer

Dean Harris is an independent illustrator and graphic designer at Design Sanctum. His independent comic strip, Dizzy, has been appearing in the Toledo Free Press since 2006. Dean was gracious enough to sit down and chat with us about Dizzy, his experiences and inspirations, and his future plans.

SP!: How long have you been a professional illustrator? How did you get your start?

DH: I can't remember when I wasn't drawing something, but I've been a professional illustrator for about 30 years. My first paid job was a cartoon for the Oconomowoc Enterprise newspaper in Wisconsin. I was 15 years old.

SP!: Tell us a bit about your background. Did you always plan on being an artist?

DH: I always thought I'd be an artist of some type. I was fine arts trained at the University of Toledo (Ohio), which means I drew ugly naked people for about five years, still haven't graduated...
I worked in various advertising firms and print houses, part time and freelance; that was B.C. (before computers). Each experience taught me a different aspect and skill that led to the next job.

SP!: I notice that you list both Peanuts and Calvin and Hobbes under your favorite books in your blog profile. Would you count these comics as influential/ inspirational? What other wellsprings do you draw from?

DH: I was influenced by many sources; some comics, some just life experiences — like being married and having a family. Peanuts would be the most inspirational. I also enjoyed T.K. Ryan's Tumbleweeds, for his many zany characters; his comic strips made me turn to the dictionary many times. I learned lots of vocab' — he was the Jeopardy of comics for me. Bloom County infected me with silliness. Also, I like these relatively-new comics, like Pearls before Swine, Cul de Sac, and Biff & Riley

SP!: Where did you get the idea for Dizzy? Is she based on a real person?

DH: I guess here is where a lawyer would say, "No. Any similarity to persons living or dead is purely coincidental," but, um yeah, my oldest daughter was the starting point for this exaggerated version of a hyper-typical teen — to this day my daughter will say things like "I'm not like that" — and well, she isn't really, but when she was 15, she had her moments ;)

SP!: You bill Dizzy as "A typical teenage girl who is just wound a bit tighter than most." What exactly does that mean, in terms of her personality?

DH: Emote first, reason second — if something can be taken wrong, she will take it that way! Like some teenage girls, she is on the verge of taking something personally every single second of the day

SP!: How about the other cast members? What do they each bring to the strip?

DH: Well, there's

Ivy — Dizzy's little sister, who knows where her sister's buttons are and knows when to push them.

Josie — the long-suffering working mother and wife, who understands her girls, even Dizzy, but not her flaky husband.

Scooter — A work-at-home dad, who tries to divide his work time and his "Dad" time and isn't very successful at either

Aunt Dorthea — Accident-prone pickle aficionado and french fry fiend. Silliness ensues with the occasional visit from the anti-Poppins, Aunt Dorthea

SP!: Once you had Dizzy drawn, how did you go about marketing and promoting

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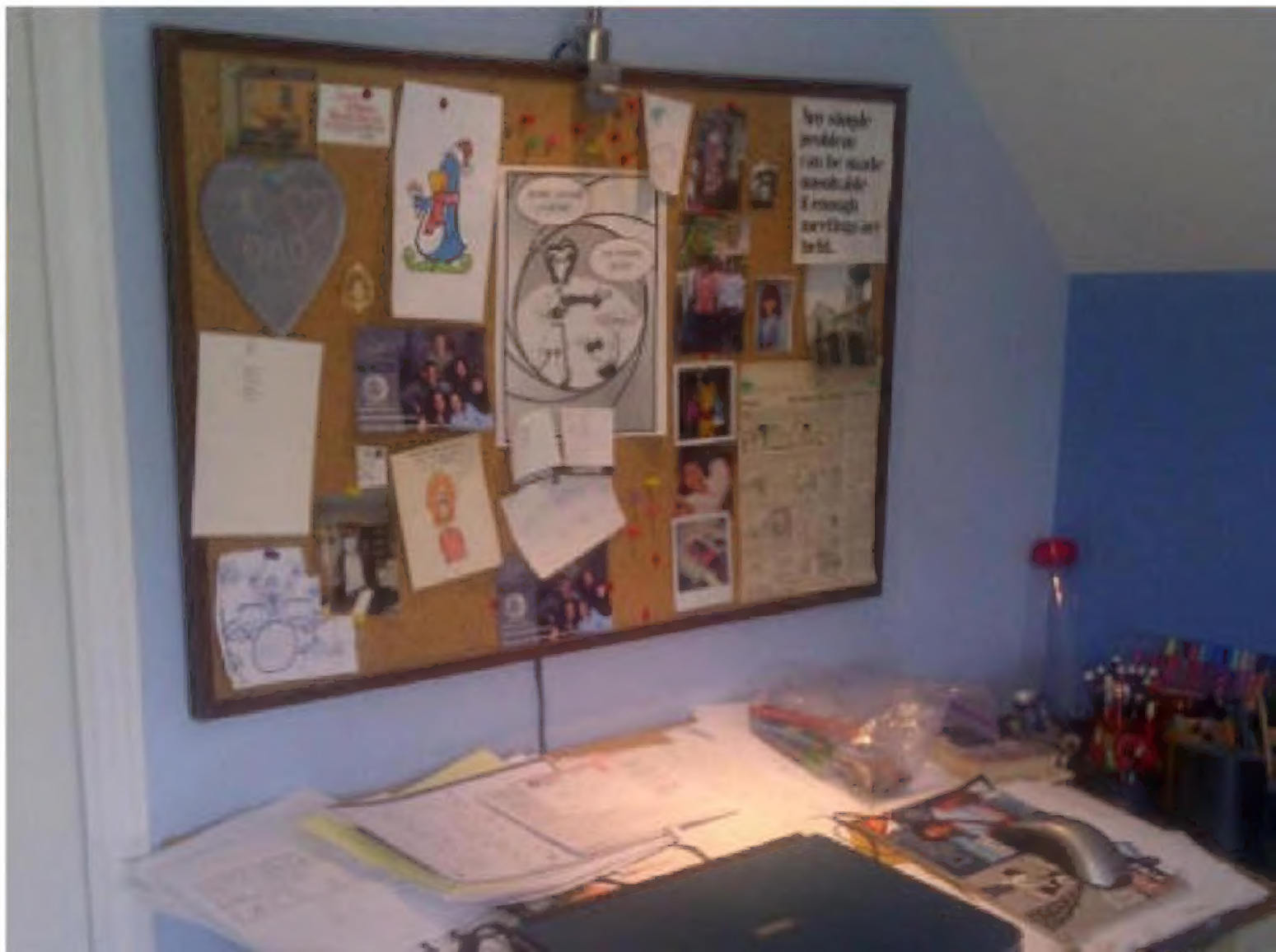

Dizzy

her?

DH: I have to admit I haven't put any real effort into it promotion-wise. I have tried self-syndicating to newspapers throughout North America. Wait, does this interview count? :)

SP!: Obviously, getting picked up by the Toledo Free Press has helped to get Dizzy into the public eye. Was there anything specific that you did that you think put you on their radar?

DH: No I don't think so. I sent some samples in emails to the publisher and the editor-in-chief. The editor said that my 'toon looked "professional" to him and he thought it was funny.

SP!: Is it difficult to keep coming up with fresh ideas every week? Do you usually try to have a certain number of strips in the can?

DH: Yes, sometimes I'm scraping the bottom of my cerebellum barrel (so to speak). I have a “gag journal” with story ideas that are sometimes in an embryonic state, so I have to "make 'em work". I find deadlines are a great motivator for creativity.

SP!: With a conventional comic book or collection, sales can often be taken as an indicator of the book's popularity. Dizzy, though, appears online and in the newspaper. How are you able to gauge whether your readers are connecting?

DH: Y' know, I'm not really sure. I'll check the blog hit-o-meter number, and sometimes one of my three fans (who are NOT related to me) tell me things like, "I don't get it," and other encouraging comments like, "I hope you do have a 'real' job on the side," and "Do they really pay you for this?"

SP!: You're an illustrator as well as a cartoonist. Are you currently working on other material, in addition to Dizzy?

DH: I've started work on a comic book project about a female archaeologist named Judith, who becomes an avenger against dark demonic spiritual forces. She finds an Aztec priest robe in a long-buried secret compartment of a overgrown temple in Central America. An evil archaeologist who heads the dig represents a world criminal group who wants the robe for its power to command these fallen spirits, but Judith finds the robe first and uses its powers for good

SP!: Where do you see yourself taking Dizzy in the future? Are you thinking ahead to things like collections, full-length comics, merchandising, TV/movie deals, etc?

DH: Yes, yes, and yes! Where do I sign? Unlike Bill Watterson, I'd be proud to license products of stuffed Dizzy dolls, Dizzy coffee mugs and even including Dizzy toilet paper. I doubt that'll happen, but wouldn't that be cool if it did? :)

SP!: What advice would you give to an aspiring cartoonist/illustrator that you wish someone had given you when you were getting started?

DH: Say yes to jobs, even if you don't think you have enough experience; apparently, they think you're ready... You'll figure it out, or ask for help. Most artists are not so competitive that they won't help an aspiring young artist.

SP!: Is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't touched on yet?

DH: First, have someone or something more important in your life than your work and give of yourself to others. It's important to forget about yourself and put time into other people's lives.

Second, Josie, the wife in the comic strip, and Judith, the heroine in the comic book, are both based on my muse and my inspiration, my love, my wife... Laura

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You can connect with Dean and Dizzy at:
dizzycomics@gmail.com
dizzycomics.blogspot.com

Michael John Morris

(a.k.a. Ozoneocean)

Interviewed by: Louise Cochran-Mason

Drunk Duck provides free hosting services for webcomic creators. It was founded in 2002 by Dylan Squires and became very popular. It was purchased by Platinum Studios in 2006 and Wowio in 2010 — though Squires continues to run it. Over the years, it has grown into a large online community and now has tutorials, forums, podcasts and a user-generated merchandise store for creators to sell their work to fans.

SP! asked Drunk Duck administrator Michael John Morris (aka Ozoneocean) more about it.

SP!: How did the Duck get started?

MJM: Dylan Squires, aka Volte6 started DD back in 2001 or something as his own personal project. The site was named "Drunk Duck" in honor of a duck he had that died. It was originally supposed to be "Dead Duck" but that name was taken... the duck looked drunk when it died though, so "Drunk Duck" worked just as well. At the time, there weren't any real comic hosting sites on the web and webcomics were a pretty new thing. Dylan decided he'd like to use his programming knowledge to help some friends host their stuff. A few years later, he opened the gates a bit wider and things took off.

SP!: Will the site always be free to creators and viewers?

MJM: Yep, always! :)

SP!: Do webcomics creators keep full ownership of their comics?

MJM: They certainly do! One hundred percent. The site is only for hosting: everything in our Terms of Service contract is in regard to the hosting aspect, because it's a kind of publishing and rebroadcasting. DD has no claim over anyone's copyright at all. That'd involve a special, specific agreement like the one they made for the Comic Book Challenge, where comic book creators won the right to publish comics through our parent company at the time (Platinum Studios) and be paid for that work... but that's another story entirely!

SP!: Is Drunk Duck a mixture of pros and hobbyists?

MJM: It certainly is! With lots more hobbyists than pros, of course—and all the pros put their work up on DD as a hobby! There are quite a few pro creators with completed comics that they decided to republish for free on DD, and some who used DD as a place to host previews of their paid-for work. Other pros put their side-project work up on the site.

SP!: Have webcomics replaced zines, mini-comics etc.?

MJM: Yes, to a major extent, and for obvious reasons: Publishing to the web is cheaper, it's easier, and your audience is far wider and more diverse. There are still people that publish to zines and such, but the web is simply more practical for creators and readers. The main reason most people make comics is to get them read and seen; the web is just the easiest way to make that happen, so it's a more popular vector.

SP!: Are your reader and creator bases spread across a range of demographic groups?

MJM: Yes; not only within the USA, but all over the world. North America is where most of our creators and readers come from, since that's where the site is hosted, but we have big groups from Britain, Australia, and all throughout Europe and Asia. That's geographics though I suppose... so demographics... hmm... Well, the majority of creators are in their 20s and 30s, about evenly split between the sexes, but we have many people who're much younger and older creating and reading comics. People come from all walks of life, all ethnic backgrounds. Comic creating and reading has no age or gender barriers; people who're passionate about creating art, telling stories, and consuming comics are drawn to the site, regardless of demographics.

One of the best aspects of DD is that we've traditionally had a pretty friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Our members like to help each other out and tend not to form the exclusive little cliques that plague so many other sites of this sort.

SP!: Are Drunk Duck readers mostly creators?

MJM: No, there are definitely a lot of non-creator readers. That's mainly because they're drawn to some of the more popular comics from outside the site.

(Continued on page 12)

SP!: Are there restrictions on the work that can be posted?

MJM: Not really. The only real restrictions are pretty obvious, logical ones. The main thing is that if you're posting an adult comic with graphic sex, you have to give it an Adult label. That means readers have to be signed into the site in order to view it, and they also have to be at least 18. The idea is that the reader signs a form to prove they are of age.
The only other things are: NOTHING with underage people in sexual situations and no posting comics that aren't your own, unless you have permission from the creator.

SP!: How many comics on Drunk Duck?

MJM: Currently there are 20,757 comics on the site. (There have been more in the past)

SP!: What types of webcomics are popular on the site?

MJM: All kinds: adult comics, gentle all-age comedies, manga-style, 3D comics, American-style superhero, cartoony comics, retro, European, SciFi, fantasy, dramas, action adventure, romance, transgender, furry, stick figure, high art, low art, etc. It's a grab bag.

SP!: How is Drunk Duck marketed?

MJM: Well, we're not really. In the past, we've had an official presence at some conventions and through some of the works published by Platinum Studios. Platinum paid for some web ads for DD comics back then, as well. Wowio had some Drunk Duck promotion as part of a big event at the 2010 San Diego Comic Con, but that's all I can think of. Mostly, creators advertise and publicize their own comics.

The big event at the 2010 San Diego Comic Con was a party on board a large yacht moored at the pier outside of the convention centre. There were banners featuring Drunk Duck there, along with the Wowio stuff. It was quite a party, with many fabulous people, a great band, lots of drinking, and dancing all night.

SP!: What does being a Drunk Duck admin involve?

MJM: I help creators and users with any problems they have with the site and do the weekly podcast (and everything involved in that: research, scheduling interviews, editing, chasing up contributors, finding all the info for the notes, and so on). There are the weekly featured comics, where I have to read through a suitable comic and write a review of it for the main page. We used to do two a week (one for each admin), but recently we've halved that and take turns. There are the news posts, to keep people informed of what's happening with the site, as well as news from our creators about their achievements. Also, troubleshooting site-wide issues and keeping people informed about those.

Organizing community activities and promoting and helping with community activities made by others... The smallest part of the job is killing spam accounts and managing social issues between users.

We used to have a much bigger problem with managing social strife, but since the forums have become less busy, a lot of the problem people moved on. One of the biggest problems used to be creators being upset with certain comments left on their comics, but since creators have been able to delete comments from their pages that hasn't been an issue for awhile.

Being a Drunk Duck admin was a voluntary position which became paid after Platinum Studios took over. Currently, it's a paid position in theory, but in practice, it's voluntary!

SP!: What can you tell us about the Drunk Duck Awards?

MJM: The Drunk Duck awards are one hundred percent creator-driven. Drunk Duck creators get together and decide what categories are fair and most representative; they decide on judges, have a design competition for each year's award, and compete for votes; they create a comic based on the whole process that presents their comics for voter consideration in the category they're nominated in, with pages featuring award presentations and attendant ceremonies... It's a pretty amazing annual creator-driven community project! Afterwards, the winners, runners up and nominees get special banners to display alongside their comics and creator profiles.

SP!: What income streams are available to Drunk Duck?

MJM: The site is funded through advertising. In the old days when Platinum Studios took over, some creators with special contracts were paid to produce work, while others were paid to have specific types of advertising on their comics, as well as for other licensing deals for their work. Creators were also free to set up their own paid advertising on their comics. The global financial crisis put a kink in a lot of things, though, and these days, with Wowio, things are different. But the site still remains a free host, due to ad sales.

SP!: What changes came about to the site following the sale to Platinum?

MJM: Back then, Dylan was paying for the cost of running the entire site

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from his own resources. He wasn't getting any money out of the site at all. He was also doing one hundred percent of the coding and solving all the issues and problems the site had as it was growing, as well as helping to manage social issues along with the other admins and moderators. At a certain point, that just got way too much for him to handle alone. The sale to Platinum Studios meant that the site had the ability to expand and take on a LOT of new creators, as well as giving Dylan a nice payoff AND a full time job doing something that he loved.

SP!: Does the current setup allow creators to release volumes of webseries through other sites?

MJM: We have no restrictions at all about what people do with their work. They can host it in as many places as they want, do whatever they like with it.

SP!: Have Drunk Duck creators gone on to work with Platinum Studios on other things?

MJM: Back when Platinum was our parent company, there was the Comic Book Challenge that gave creators a paid contract to produce work. Other creators had deals to work on comic projects. People sold licenses for the TV/movie rights for some work... I can't really speak much about that stuff, because I was only on the fringes of it at the time. Of course, the biggest thing was the Cowboys and Aliens webcomic they had up on Drunk Duck— which later went on to become a movie with Daniel Craig and Harrison Ford, but that was entirely through their own writers and artists... And it wasn't very well done (the comic, not the movie, which I've never seen).

SP!: Do many creators use info on the forums about earning money from webcomics to actually make money from their stuff?

MJM: I couldn't tell you how many people on the site are moved to try and make money off of their work using that info. I know a few have, though. The main ways to make money off of your work on the web are through advertising around your comic and selling merchandise related to it, like T-shirts.

In the site's current incarnation, it is extremely difficult for our users to do that, so most who'd like to end up going forth and setting up their own independent hosting, so they can do what they want. If I get serious about making money from my own comics, that's what I will do, too. For that reason, most people who have their comics up on the site do it mainly for love.

SP!: Tell us about the Quackcasts.

MJM: The Quackcasts are a weekly podcast that've been running for coming on three years, now. They focus on our creative community. We interview comic creators about all aspects of their work. Some Quackcasts are more technical; we talk about story creation, the nature of comedy writing, site metrics, or give an intro into popular art programs... We talk about genre writing, art styles, etc. Other Quackcasts are devoted to community projects like the Drunk Duck awards or the annual DD Radio Play, where we literally have a radio play — as well as various other creative plays we organize occasionally.

The two admins, Skoolmunkee and myself, also do a recap of our featured comics for the week. Skool is far more detailed than I!

The Quackcasts were started at the behest of Wowio back in 2010, reluctantly, by Skoolmunkee and me. They were initially supposed to be a video series, but that was too much work for Skool and me, so it turned into a podcast, instead. Kinh Nguyen at Wowio did all the editing and backup recording. After a while that moved on to Skool and me doing Kinh's job, then Skool stopped doing the Quackcasts and I did them solo for a while, till I was joined by Banes — a fellow comic creator on DD.

SP!: What is the "Quack With the Ducks Community Project"?

MJM: To be honest, I had no idea. I had to look this up on Google! I think I actually participated in it at one point, though...

OK, it's a kind of a group interviewing process. People all sign up to be part of it and then the host pairs people off to interview one another — no one interviews their own interviewer, though. They can conduct their interviews in whatever way they like and the results are posted to the website for all to read.

SP!: Who writes the tutorials?

MJM: The tutorials are written by whoever has something useful to share. If you want to help people draw in your style, teach them to write a certain way, or use a particular program, then you can write your own tutorial about it. Quite a few tutorials were written by me, as a way of preserving some of the helpful info we'd gleaned for the technical Quackcasts.

SP!: Anything to add?

MJM: A couple of things: I'm proud to have been part of Drunk Duck for a decade. I joined as a comic creator in 2003 and began posting my work in 2004. I got involved in helping the community; they made me a moderator and, eventually, an administrator — one of about 5 at the time. After many changes, there are only two of us running the site now, without any moderators. It's been a tough road, with many highs and lows, but I've stuck with the old site, regardless.

Through it all, I've always hosted my own comics on Drunk Duck, along with everyone else, as a fellow creator, and I continue to do so (Pinky TA and now Bottomless Waitress). I'm very happy to be part of such a large, ongoing creative community!

For more information, visit:

www.drunkduck.com/

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Matt Forbeck Interview

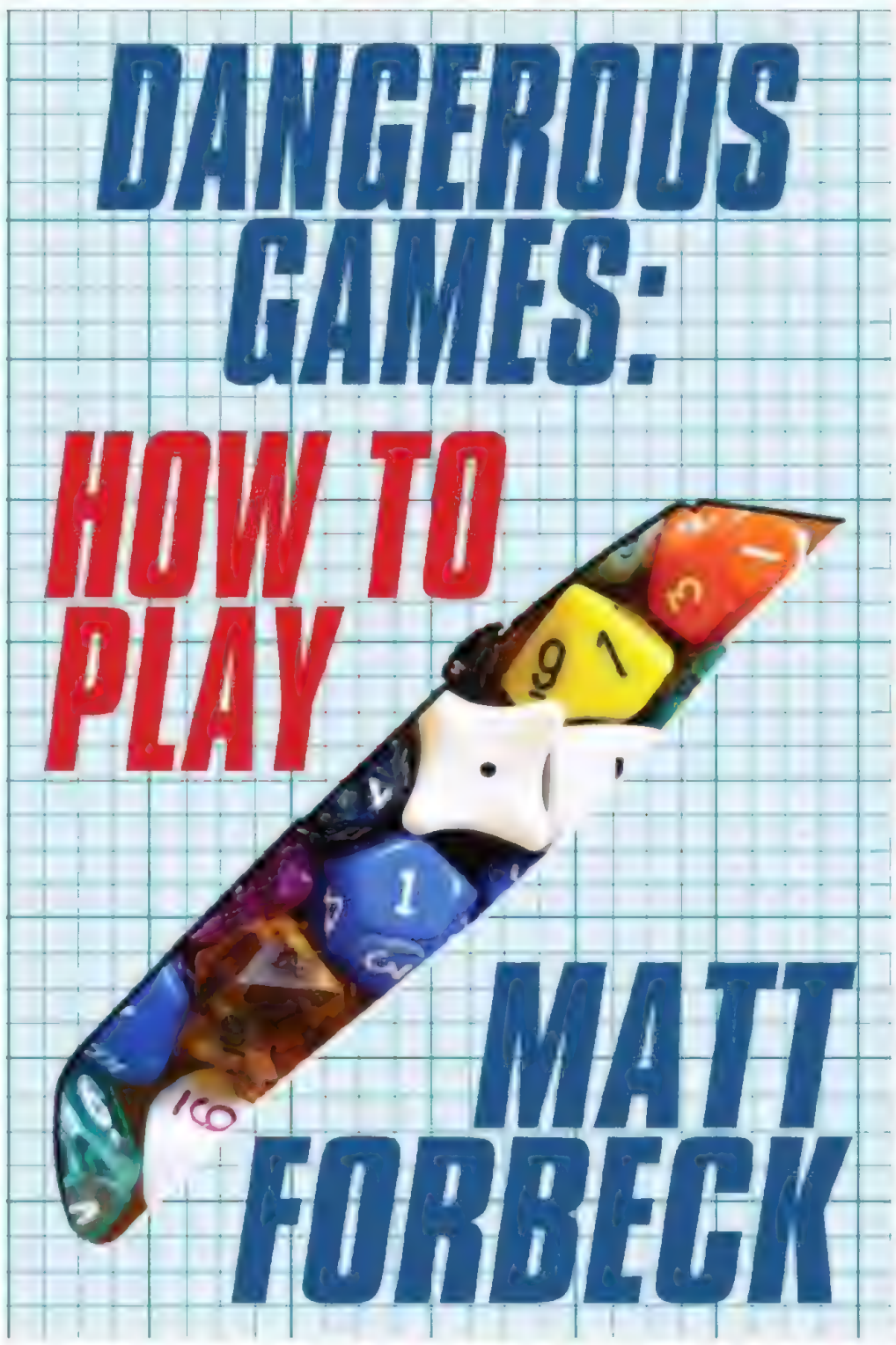
Conducted by Louise Cochran-Mason

Matt Forbeck has been a full-time writer and game designer since graduating from the University of Michigan in 1989, with a degree in creative writing.

His works include: Amortals (Author), Guild Wars: Ghosts of Ascalon (Co-author with Jeff Grubb), The Marvel Encyclopedia (Revised 2009 edition), Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law video game (Co-writer), Marvel Heroes Battle Dice (Designer), Marked for Death (Author), The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game (Co-writer/Developer), Brave New World: The Roleplaying Game (Designer), Deadlands: The Weird West Roleplaying Game (Editor), Warzone Miniatures Battle Game (Editor), WildStorms: The Expandable Collectible Card Game (Co-Designer), and Western Hero (Designer).

He has done a lot of freelance work, but also co-founded the Pinnacle Entertainment Group (with Shane Lacy Hensley) and was director of the adventure games division at Human Head Studios. Several projects that Matt worked on have been won Origins Awards.

Many of his recent projects have been self-published. SP! Asked Matt about his career and future plans.



SP!: What projects are you currently working on?

MF: Let's see. I have a book and a half left to write in my "12 for '12" project and, including those, I have five books left to produce (edit, package, format, etc). I just sold an original novel to Tor that's due in September. I just finished the second novel in a trilogy based on Paolo Parente's tabletop game *Dusta*, and I have a third to write for that.

On top of that, I'm working on an iOS video game with Ubisoft Shanghai. And I have a few other projects in stages that I can't talk about yet. I like to keep busy.

SP!: In February 2012, you set yourself the task of writing twelve novels in twelve months? How did you find the experience? Did you meet the deadline?

MF: I loved it. It's like transforming writing into performance art. As for the deadline, I didn't quite make it. However, I did write ten novels (including a tie-in for the *Leverage* TV show), nine comic book scripts (for the *Magic: The Gathering* comic from IDW), and a few short stories, so at least, I failed well.

SP!: Would you attempt a similar project again?

MF: No. It's not that I'm intimidated by the number of projects or the amount of work involved, but I don't see the point of doing the same kind of stunt twice. I'll run Kickstarters again, but they'll be for different things.

SP!: What made you decide to self- publish Brave New World, and choose to crowd-fund?

MF: I'd long been interested in self-publishing, but as a working writer, it's hard to set aside several months to work on a novel that may or may not make any money. Kickstarter provided the missing piece of that puzzle. The money my backers put up for my books made up for the fact that self-publishing doesn't come with an advance.

SP!: You have held four successful Kickstarter campaigns, one for each of the trilogies you created for 12 For 12. Did you do anything differently in later Kickstarters?

MF: As I went through the four Kickstarters, I learned a lot and applied those lessons to each new drive. The biggest thing I did was change the structure of my drives. In the first two, I set a low goal for the first book of the trilogy and put the other two books as stretch goals — items backers would get if we reached higher levels of funding.

I realized that some of my backers were balking at the idea that they might back a trilogy and only get a single book. For the last two drives, I set a higher goal to fund the entire trilogy at once. It gave everyone — including me — better peace of mind.

SP!: How did you go about promoting a Kickstarter?

MF: I hit my social networks hard and I did dozens of interviews and guest

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blogs for whoever would have me. The clock starts ticking the moment you launch the Kickstarter, and that kind of pressure helps to force you to be focused. It really does suck up every spare moment of your life.

SP!: Do you have any tips for running a Kickstarter: perks, promotion, etc...?

MF: Keep it simple. Make sure your backers know what they're getting. Give them good things for their money. And give them good reasons to tell all their friends and get them on board, too.

SP!: Do you release all of your self-published works through Full Moon Enterprises?

MF: Yes, that's the corporation I run all my freelance writings and game designs through too, so it makes sense to keep my self-publishing efforts under that umbrella.

SP!: You do both self-published and published-by-others books. Do you have a preference?

MF: They both have their advantages. I like the freedom self-publishing gives me, as well as the speed at which I can get a book on shelves. Working with a big publisher means someone else helps me with all the details of publishing and puts their massive marketing muscles behind those books. They also help bring in new readers for me, to whom I can then sell my self-pubbed book, as well.

SP!: "1989–1990 Games Workshop Design Studio, Nottingham, England"... Did you move to UK or work remotely?

MF: I flew over to the UK on a student work visa when I was fresh out of college. My father bought me a one-way ticket as a graduation present. I didn't know anyone in the entire country, but I called up the folks at Games Workshop and asked for an interview. They gave it to me and hired me.

I worked there for six months — until my visa ran out — and they offered me a full-time position. My girlfriend at the time still lived in the US, finishing up her degree. She wisely said we should break it off if I wasn't coming back.

I gave up the job and flew home in time for Valentine's Day to be with that girl. She's now my wife of twenty

years and the mother of my five children, so I think I made the right choice.

SP!: You list consulting, budgeting, management, and leadership among your skills (on your resume). Do you think that, as a freelance creator, you are basically running a company?

MF: Very much so. I actually ran a roleplaying game company called Pinnacle Entertainment Group for four years, back in the late '90s. Being a freelancer is much the same thing. If you don't treat it as a business, you're doomed to let it become a hobby instead.

SP!: For the tie-ins (such as your Leverage novel), did the publishers approach/headhunt you to work on them based on your published works, or did you apply for them?

MF: For my first ones, I hunted them down, knocked them on their heads, and took the contracts out of their pockets. I'd written games for both Games Workshop and Wizards of the Coast at the time, but not novels. I had to pester them for months and then show them a finished novel I'd written for Reaper Miniatures before they would relent.

Nowadays, people tend to approach me for the tie-ins instead. I was asked to pitch an idea for my *Guild Wars* book, for instance. For my *Leverage* novel, I've known the series co-creator John Rogers for years and I helped him set up the book deal with Ginjer Buchanan at Ace, whom I've known for even longer.

SP!: You have done work-for-hire and creator owned books, and been published and self published. Do you have a preference?

MF: They all have their benefits. I have a strong leaning toward creator-owned at the moment, although I would jump up and down for the right tie-in deal. As for publishing types, I don't see a need to choose between them and plant a flag in either. They each have their place and I'm fortunate to be able to do both.

SP!: How important do you think it is for creators to have their work in bricks-and-mortar shops, as well as online?

MF: For self-pubbed books, it's almost impossible to have a meaningful presence in stores. That's one huge thing traditional publishers bring to writers. It's becoming less vital as the years roll on, but having your book on a shelf where readers are hunting for good reads still makes for fantastic marketing.

SP!: You have written prose novels, games and comic book scripts. Do you find it challenging to move between the three disciplines?

MF: Not at all. I actually enjoy flexing different writing muscles any chance I get. I also write non-fiction books, magazine articles, blog posts, computer games, and screenplays. They all have their different formats and conventions, but you'd be surprised how well good storytelling skills come in handy, no matter what you're writing.

Learning how to write different things helps me keep my own writing fresh, too. I can take tricks I learn in one field and apply them to another.

SP!: The publishing and gaming industries have changed a lot since you started out. Do you think it is harder to make a living as a writer now?

MF: If anything, it's easier. With the rise of the internet, I can reach out to publishers with the click of a button and I can mobilize fans and sell books to people with the same ease. Also, because of the advent of self-

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publishing, I can bypass anyone else if I like and bring stories straight to the readers. That's fantastic power and it gives writers wonderful options to explore.

SP!: Do you think it is harder to make a living as a game designer now (with all the free apps and online games that are available)?

MF: When I started, we didn't have apps, or Facebook, or even the web. Relatively few people played games. Now everybody plays games and they want fresh content all the time. The competition for designers has become stiffer, but that benefits everyone, I think.

Making money at games may seem trickier with the rise of freemium games, but those came about as a solution to the problem of piracy. That means more money going to publishers, which they can then use to hire designers. I'm all for that.

SP!: Do you have a favorite type of computer game (to design and to play)?

MF: I like to design games with interesting choices, things that are fun and light, but require a bit of thought to really master. When I play, though, I often like to shut off that part of my brain and shoot things instead.

What can I say? It's good to recognize that you're not always the ideal customer for your own work.

SP!: When you first started out, was it difficult to get publishers and software houses to look at your work?

MF: Sure, but in the long run, persistence wins. You do good work and establish a reputation as someone who's easy to work with and word gets around. It takes a while to get there, but most overnight sensations take a decade or so to build.

SP!: Do you think the Internet has made it easier for people to self-publish and distribute their self-published work?

MF: Easier? It's essential. Without the web, self-pubbed books would (and did, historically) wind up being sold to a tiny number of stores where readers would have to struggle to find them. The growth of ebooks means that readers can find a self-pubbed book as easily as a bestseller.

SP!: Do you think the number of self published comics, print-on-demand comics, digital comics, and web comics makes it more difficult for individual creators to promote and market their work?

MF: Not at all. We had lots of indie comics before, but to find them you either had to have an excellent store nearby or hit a lot of comic book conventions. And to sell those books, you had to put an ad in Diamond's Previews catalog and pray. Now I can hear about a great comic on Twitter or Facebook and run over to Comixology or DriveThruComics and grab something in an instant.

SP!: Do you do a lot of signings and appearances? Are you planning to go to any conventions this year?

MF: I used to do a lot of conventions, but I try to limit myself to a smaller number these days, mostly so I can get some work done and still see my wife and kids. That said, I hit four of them in April for some reason.

Later this year, I'll be at Gen Con for sure. It's the largest tabletop gaming convention in the nation and it has a wonderful Writer's Symposium track, too. That's the best place to find me. I also have appearances scheduled at Geek.Kon in Madison, Nanocon in South Dakota, and the SE Wisconsin Festival of Books in Milwaukee. Plus some others I'm probably forgetting about.

SP!: What projects do you have coming up in the future?

MF: There's that book I sold to Tor, a trilogy of novels based on *Dust*, six more novels to release from my 12 for '12 project (the *Dangerous Games* and *Monster Academy* trilogies), the iOS game that'll be in beta this summer, and a few other things. I'm deep into a few projects that will show up on Kickstarter sometimes this year, too, if all works out.

SP!: What are your hobbies?

MF: Spending time with my wife and kids. I don't honestly have a lot of spare time and that's my main focus for what I do have.

That said, I'm fortunate that I've made most of my hobbies (comics, tabletop games, video games, novels, etc.) into my profession. It's wonderful to be able to enjoy what you do, and I'm fortunate enough to manage that for myself.

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Potted Resume

(split to show concurrently running projects)

1988 – Present

Full Moon Enterprises Beloit, WI

Freelance Writer/Editor/ Game Designer/Consultant

• Consulted with and completed published work for Hasbro, Wizards of the Coast, Playmates Toys, WizKids, Decipher, Wizard Press, Games Workshop, WildStorm Productions, Image Comics, AEG, TSR, and White Wolf, among others, including several award-winning products. See curriculum vitae for details.

• Produced trading card games, roleplaying games, short stories, novels, toy lines, miniatures games, comics, magazine articles, and board games, among others.

Education 1989 University of Michigan—Ann Arbor Ann Arbor, MI

Bachelor of Arts, Concentration: Creative Writing

1989–1990 Games Workshop Design Studio Nottingham, England

Game Editor, Developer, Designer, and Copywriter

• Editor and designer for Space Hulk and Blood Bowl game lines.

• Ad designer and copy writer.

1993–1995 Iron Crown Enterprises Charlottesville, VA

Game Editor/Designer

• Line editor, developer, and writer for Silent Death boardgame line.

• Writer for Middle-earth Roleplaying line

1996–1999 Pinnacle Entertainment Group Blacksburg, VA

President/Co-founder

• Founded a publisher that became a top-five roleplaying-game company in less than two years.

• Developed several award-winning products, including Deadlands: The Weird West.

• Managed Pinnacle's home office and oversaw the coordination, budgeting, sourcing, and production of several concurrent projects being worked on by a number of freelancers and in-house staff.

• Responsible for training and managing production staff.

2002–2004 Human Head Studios Madison, WI

Director—Adventure Games Division

• Launched adventure games division for successful computer game developer.

• Managed the sourcing and production of all games in the division simultaneously.

Weblinks:

http://www.forbeck.com/

http://www.peginc.com/

www.humanheadgames.com

http://www.robottradingcompany.com/search/for/-/in/0/brand/18/

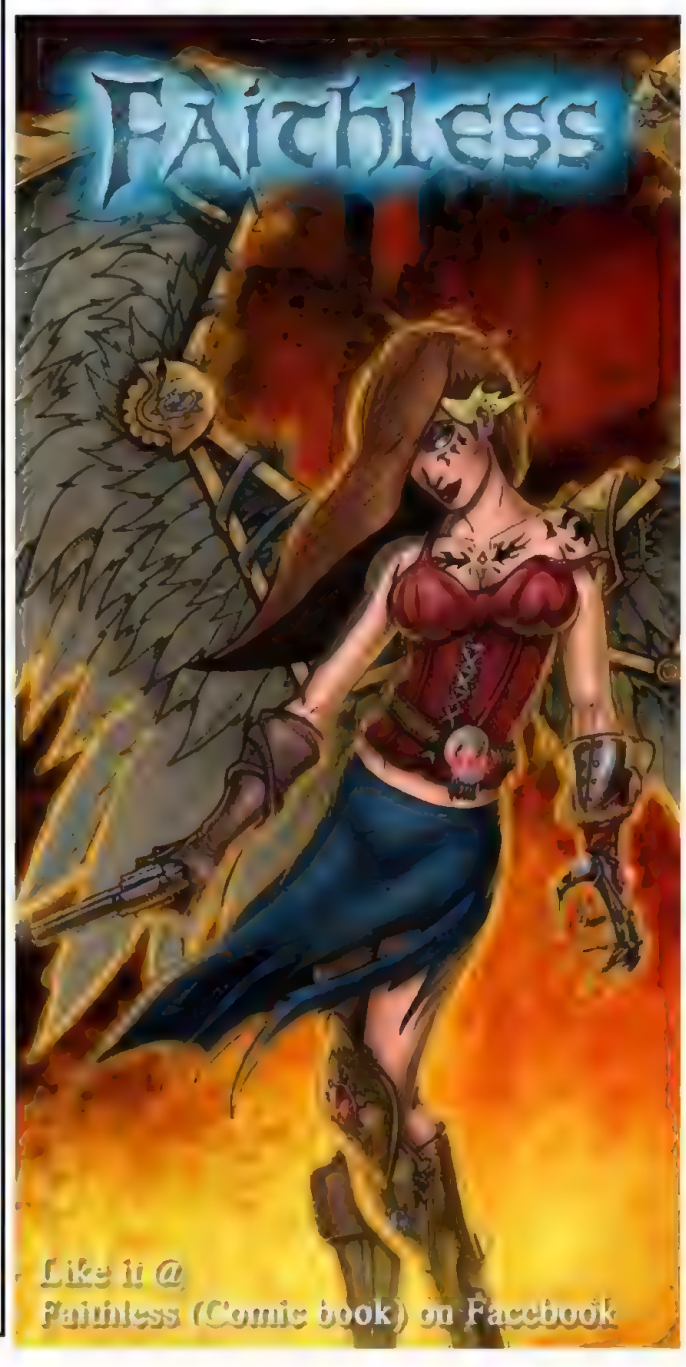
http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/15825447-matt-forbeck-s-brave-new-world

Links to Matt's Kickstarter pages:

www.kickstarter.com/projects/forbeck/12-for-12-10-bnw-novels
www.kickstarter.com/projects/forbeck/12-for-12-20-shotguns-and-sorcery-novels

http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/forbeck/12-for-12-30-dangerous-games-novels

http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/forbeck/12-for-12-40-monster-academy-novels



Interview with Stephen Stonebraker

Conducted by Nicholas Yanes

Stephen Stonebraker is the author of the novel Wrestling with Reasons. He has a degree in history education from Buena Vista University in Ottumwa, Iowa, which he earned in 2009. He currently lives in Des Moines, Iowa, and is a public relations and communications specialist. In his free time, he is working on a second novel, tentatively called The Best of Friends.

SP!: I believe that like all Superheroes, every writer has an origin story. When did you realize that you had a love for telling stories?

Stephen Stonebraker: Very early on. I've loved telling and writing stories ever since I was a little kid. When I was in first grade, at the tender age of seven, I entered a contest and was chosen, along with another student, out of all of the students in our class, to attend a young writers' conference. It's been something I've had in me since the very beginning.

SP!: Both during and after college, you participated in theater productions. What did theater acting teach you about story telling?

Stonebraker: Theater really teaches the importance of showing and not telling. While writing for the stage and writing for the page are two different art forms, they still share a lot of the same basic structure.

On a side note, theater really taught me how difficult comedy is to write. All other emotions are fairly easy to translate from the mind to the page. Something frightening in the mind is frightening on the page. Something heartbreaking in the mind is heartbreaking on the page. Something funny in the mind may not be funny on the page.

Humor is the hardest emotion to get out of your audience, especially when writing a novel. Humor relies so heavily upon what isn't said through dialog, or even conveyed through narration, but on the physicality of the event. When writing humor, you rely so heavily upon the imagination of your reader to be able to picture in their mind the event and find it as humorous as you do. If theater taught me anything as a writer, it was how difficult writing humor can be.

SP!: In addition to theater, you were also a member of the Midwest Xtreme Wrestling Alliance (MXWA). How do you think professional wrestling has influenced how you approach storytelling and character development?

Stonebraker: In professional wrestling, there are pretty much two types of workers. You have the workers that go out into the ring night after night, trying to impress the other workers and then you have the types that go out night after night, trying to entertain the fans in the audience who paid money to see them. During my short stint in the world of professional wrestling, I always tried to take the latter of the two options. I take a very similar approach towards my writing. I have a very specific audience in mind each time I sit down to write, and while my focus isn't solely to entertain them, it is to relate to them and I always keep them in mind.

Professional wrestling, in so many ways, is such a great reflection of society. We have good guys and bad guys in the real world, the same way they do in pro wrestling. We have people switching sides all the time, going back and forth, the same way they do in pro wrestling. We have people in real life that are bad guys that think they're good guys, the same way we do in pro wrestling. People are weird and whacky in real life, the same way they are in pro wrestling. You are never short on personalities in the world of pro wrestling, which gives great influence to any character you are trying to create when writing a novel.

SP!: Your first published novel was Wrestling with Reasons. For people who have never heard of this novel, how would you briefly describe it?

Stonebraker: In a lot of ways, it's like Shoeless Joe (the book that was later adapted into the movie *Field of Dreams*), except you go from the baseball field to the wrestling mat. It's a story of a haunting past full of regrets, and of not learning to let go of past, but instead learning how to make it work for you, not against you.

I think it's a great story for anyone that has ever given up. For anyone that is severely depressed and believes that life is never going to get any better. When I wrote the story, suicidal individuals, ones who truly believe there is nothing left in life to live for, are the audience that I wrote for. I wanted to show them that, regardless of how hopeless things may seem, that the darkness in their life won't last forever. Happiness, prosperity, and satisfaction will eventually happen. The key is to never give up on them. That's really what the story is about.

SP!: What inspired you to write Wrestling with Reasons?

Stonebraker: My own life. I went through a lot of dark times in my life.

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Probably the most traumatic experience I ever went through is when my little sister Sydney died. It happened on March 3, 1998, and it haunted me for over ten years. It's something that I thought about every day. It gave me a lot of negative feelings, like regret and guilt. I realized one day that it had been ten years since she had died and I still felt as horrible about it then as I did the day it happened. I knew that I had to get help. A therapist told me that the answer was to let go of the experience.

She was wrong. That wasn't the answer.

It is an energy that is going to be with me every day, until the day I die. I will never go through a day, ever, throughout the rest of my life when I won't think of her at least once. Coming to terms with the fact that this was my reality and that that energy was never going away, I decided that what I could do instead was turn that negative energy into positive. That's how Wrestling with Reasons came about. I took that energy and let it motivate me to write a novel that I felt could possibly help someone who has gone through similar experiences.

SP!: In my opinion, one of the hardest parts of writing a book is simply completing it. How did you keep yourself motivated enough to finish this project?

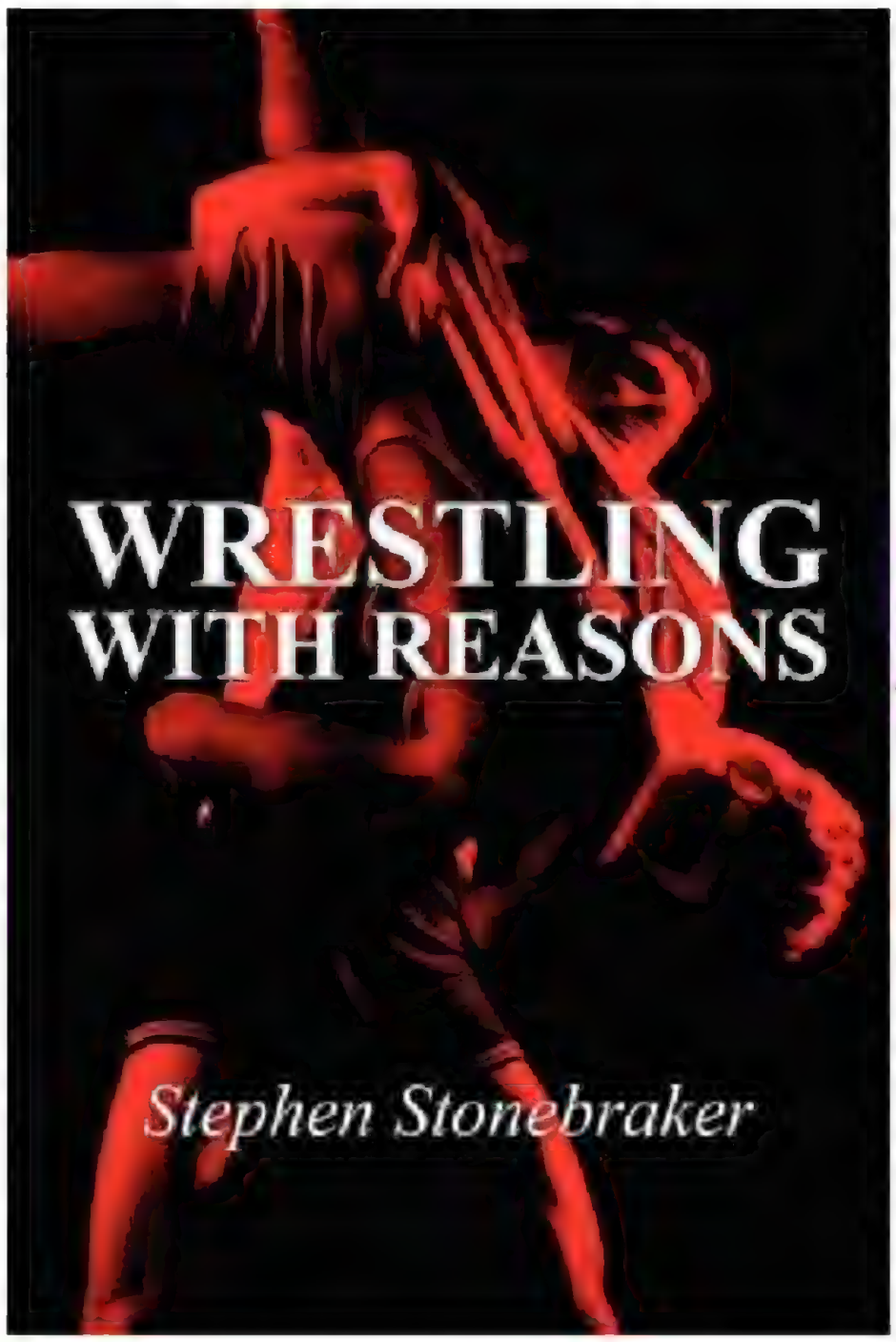
Stonebraker: It's a promise that I made to Sydney. I swore to her that I was going to do my absolute best to become the absolute best in life that I could be. I take that vow more seriously than I do anything else in life that I have ever done or will ever do. It's all the motivation I need.

SP!: You had Wrestling with Reasons published through PublishAmerica. What were some of the reasons why you selected this company?

Stonebraker: Out of being impatient. I had just written my first novel. It was a story that had burned inside of me for six years; one that I had worked on, day in and day out, for two years, and put so much time and effort into. I was anxious and excited to share it with the rest of the world. After spending a year and $175 of my own money sending out queries and copies of my manuscript, week after week, I grew tired of rejection. A friend of mine told me that PublishAmerica would publish anyone's book and just to have it out there for people to read might be a good idea. Looking back at it now, from a financial, as well as from a distributional, standpoint, it probably wasn't the best idea I've ever had. I forgive myself though, because it was my first go-round.

SP!: Since publishing with PublishAmerica, what have you learned about this aspect of the writing industry?

Stonebraker: How insanely hard it is to break into. It defines the term, "Catch 22" impeccably. Everyone is more than willing to publish you if you already have a notable track record. If you already are a 'somebody', they'll work with you. Yet, how do you become a 'somebody' if no one will take a chance on you? I received so many rejection letters at home, that clearly stand out to me as evidence that the publisher or literary agent that I sent my query to didn't even read what I had sent them.



Out of the few that did respond to me, I was given a piece of advice from a literary agent in Pittsburgh that I take to heart. He told me to always write with two things in the back of my mind. A: is what I'm writing going to translate well to film? B: am I taking an approach in my story from an angle that no one else ever has before?

SP!: Your next book is called The Best of Friends. How would you briefly describe it?

Stonebraker: The things I value in life more than anything else are family and friendship. I value my friends and family members I think of as friends, more than I do anything. When I think of the promise I made Sydney, being a good friend is the number one priority that I put towards being the best person I can be.

My best friend today at 28, is the same best friend that I had when I was seven. On top of that, many of the friends I had from my youth, I'm still friends with today. I wanted to convey what friendship means to me, and demonstrate its true power in a story. I chose to do so in a mystery/suspense that illustrates how far one friend would go for the other. Whether I actually accomplished that or not, I don't know, but that was the goal.

SP!: Given your experience with Wrestling with Reasons, what are some lessons you learned that you feel have helped— and will help — you publish The Best of Friends?

Stonebraker: Patience and always being open to revisions. No joke, I've rewritten the ending to The Best of Friends thirty times and I'm still not happy with it. It's also learning to be comfortable with the fact that, even after putting a ton of time and effort into something, in the end, it may end up just as an idea. Think of it, if you will, like an old car that someone buys for parts. While I'd like The Best of Friends to spin its wheels and cruise nicely and smoothly down the highway of readers, it may end up just sitting on the shelf and being used for parts when I write future stories. If fellow writers that have had success give you any advice at all, it is always to strive for perfection. Not so much to feel that your work is perfect, but to feel that your work is as perfect as you can make it. Two of my friends that are fairly successful writers will ask me a thousand times in a row, "Have you revised your story?" I'll answer, "Yes, I have" for the thousandth time — and their next response will be, "Good, revise it again."

Lastly, to not have any restrictions on a story. Let the story be what it

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is. I think part of the problem with The Best of Friends is that I wanted it to be a novel so badly, that I forced it to be so. In reality, it's really a short story or a novella,and I shouldn't have kept trying to extend it to make it into a novel. That was a mistake and it's why I'm unsatisfied with the ending.

SP!: Overall, what are some long term goals you have for yourself as a writer?

Stonebraker: To never lose my inspiration, desire, and motivation to be a writer. As of right now, I have so many ideas in my head for new stories. I just love to tell stories. If there is ever any financial reward in doing all of this, great, but to me, the real satisfaction of being a writer is the response I get from my readers. If I write something sad and it makes them cry, or if I write about an injustice and it makes them feel motivated to take a stand of their own, that's the real reward as a writer to me. I hope to write many more stories. I hope by the time I'm dead, I've written at least 25 novels.

SP!: Finally, are you currently working on any projects that people should keep an eye out for?

Stonebraker: I have so many ideas in my head, I sometimes wonder if my head is going to explode. I've been reading a lot of biographical information on Ted Bundy, as well as watching a lot of documentaries on him. I would like to write a novel about a serial killer that is similar to Bundy in that he or she is the last person anyone would ever suspect of such crimes. To further the thought, I've had an idea of writing a crime novel from the perspective of a reporter who knows that the man on death row is innocent of the crimes he is accused of and must figure out who is really responsible.

Another idea I have in my head is to take the current situation with student loans and write about it in a comical way that conveys the message. My thought here is to create a character that graduated from college, can't find a decent job and spends almost all of his time working to barely afford to be able to pay his student loans, as well as the rest of his bills. An old science professor of his invents a rejuvenation formula that will allow his former student to be able to function without any sleep, so he can now work enough to be able to save up money in the bank and get ahead.

I also feel compelled, as an agnostic, to write a story from an agnostic perspective. I feel that theists, especially within the Christian community, have plenty of voices to represent their views and their feelings. I feel that atheists have a fair representation in the world of literature as well. I don't feel that agnostics do. I feel, instead, we're often grouped together with atheists, which I feel is not a fair and accurate representation of who we are and what we believe. There are a lot of written words that express that it's ok to be a Christian and that it's even ok to be an atheist. I don't feel there is much saying that it's ok to say that you don't know and to be an agnostic. I'd like to give fellow agnostics a voice through the literary world.

Find the book on Amazon!

http://www.amazon.com/dp/1462626025

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Danny McMaughlin of Uproar Comics

Conducted by Mike Schneider

SP!: Uproar is a small press publisher based in Ireland. How does it stack up against other small press publishers? How is it better and how is it worse?

Danny McLaughlin: Uproar is organic. It started off as two guys who believed that story was key — the driving force which, combined with a love of comics, birthed comic book stories. Since then, it has grown in the areas of business, marketing, and research and development. We change. As I said, we are organic; we have learned the craft of comic-style storytelling and utilised it to promote awareness of ourselves and other businesses and organizations.

Downside is that now we are organic. (Shocking!) We do change, so it's hard to follow different types of markets, etc., and everything we do is kind of a gamble. There's always a sense of risk, but it makes a good story.

SP!: To extend the 'organic' metaphor, where does Uproar fall on a scale of plankton to apex predator?

DM: Great question. It seems as if an apex predator should be the most efficient, but I'm gonna say a gigantic cosmic plankton monster, because it's kinda cool and we don't wanna be a massive Marvel or DC — we like being independent, but with a bit more punch.

SP!: Uproar sounds ready to take on all themes and genres... and yet, most organisms tend to evolve to fill a niche in their environment. Have you encountered any projects which felt like someone was asking a fish to climb a tree?

DM: Yip, full on satirical comedy, Courtroom, contemporary politics,... just off the top of my head! We could put our hand to them or to others, but we think we won't, because we spend our days dreaming of sci-fi and superheroes, etc. Why would we want to do something we don't want to do?

SP!: Has Uproar evolved far enough to have vestigial features? Is there anything that was once essential to Uproar, which no longer plays an active role in your future plans?

DM: Hard question… The only things I can think of as being redundant are the goals we have already achieved.

SP!: Currently the staple of Uproar's catalog is Zombie Hi. Uproar offers various other services, but are there plans to expand the catalog?

DM: As noted, we're constantly learning to take a more businesslike approach. With this in mind, we plan to launch the DEC and, no matter whether it's successful or not, we plan to launch a five-pilot program. With some fan feedback, polls, etc., the winner will be given the green light for a series.

The five stories include (working titles): Cohen — a noir crime story, Leap, a space exploration sci-fi, Extra-Ordinary, a teen superhero romance, Conundrum a retro-steampunk mystery, and, because we love the Irish element, Gifted — an Irish mythological fantasy.

But yes, Zombies Hi, was the spark. In the next few months, and with the release of the DEC, we will just begin to light the fuses of what's to come.

SP!: Which of the series Uproar is about to launch with the DEC do you feel most excited about? Why?

DM: As mentioned, it's everything we love. Cohen has been brewing for years; same with Conundrum, but I have to say, Leap — even though it's only been in formulation for the last few months. This is something of a 'what if' story; the tropes of Star Trek and other sci-fis with a twist, but told in the manner of a mystery — and technically, everyone wears a red shirt!

SP!: Is the primary conflict in 'Zombie Hi' survivors versus zombies, survivors versus other survivors, or survivors versus fear and insanity?

DM: Yip, all of them! It is the zombie apocalypse *laughs,* but with a "terrorism" cherry on top and an illustration of how old causes "don't die"… they keep coming back to haunt us!

SP!: Zombie Hi Issue 8 is out now. Based on the experience thus far, how long do you expect the series to run?

DM: Well, the original concept was to run for about 24 issues, but we want to tell the story we have planned and not overstretch it. We plan to cut that down to possibly 18 max issues, which will give us more time to focus on other projects and not dilute the story by just sticking to the original concept, because we have learned a lot and have progressed the story for issue 8 beyond where it was originally going be in-story.

SP!: Do you have a plan for how Zombie Hi will end, or are you taking it one issue at a time?

DM: Little from column A, little from column B! There is an end in sight and milestones along the way, but we just are taking different paths as we go.

SP!: Zombie Hi also features short zombie comics submitted by independent creators. (Submissions: http://www.uproarcomics.co.uk/submissions.html) On average, are the submissions better or worse than the pages you produce in-house?

DM: On average, you do get a pile of crazy ramblings, usually "stories" that have no end. It's just concepts, but, of course, once in a while, you do get the odd one that makes you smile, or laugh,

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or vomit — all for a positive reason.

SP!: Does Zombie Hi have States-side distribution?

DM: Our goal is to build connections in North America (we are already in some talks) and, eventually, become globally-distributed within the digital realm.

SP!: On average, what percentage of sales are print and what percentage are digital? How has that changed since your first issue?

DM: The sales have definitely turned from 100 percent print to 60 percent, so there is an emerging digital market — even though the consensus is that they prefer print; maybe it's a host of new readers coming along who will just read comics for the stories and forget the media preference.

SP!: The DEC (Digital Experience Comic) is a new interactive comics app. which your press release says 'will change the comics medium forever'. When compared to Marvel AR and the numerous other apps which add animation, sound, behind-the-scenes content, and Easter eggs to the comics reading experience, what makes your app stand out from the others?

DM: What makes us different? Our tagline doesn't change: We. Make. Comics. We keep the true art of comic book storytelling intact. I found reading — especially with the MadeFire app — that it breaks the story flow for some fancy thing. We are comic book creators and that's what we will always do: make comics! Yes, we are creating the Digital Experience Comic (DEC) and we have loads of features, like you said: animation, sound, behind-the-scenes content, and Easter eggs, but it's not what we put in, it's what we already have at the core, which is content over style.

SP!: Is DEC open to other publishers and self-published creators, or is it exclusive to Uproar's catalog?

DM: Yes, it is open to other publishers, etc. We see this as our software serving as the next step for pre-existing companies, independents, and small press. It's an easy, fun way to make new media comics and stories for anyone; we are gonna show the world that we can be creative with the content and not just throw some things together, so it looks flashy, but eventually hinders the story.

SP!: How are comics formatted and published to DEC? Are development tools available?

DM: The Comics are published on Active Reader: a new piece of software, which seems to be growing and changing every day, so it holds so much potential for us. Keep your eyes peeled for some new fun stuff we have planned for the second half of 2013.

SP!: You described DEC's secret sauce as 'content over style'. That means the thing which is unique to DEC is Uproar and how you plan to use that software. You also mention that DEC would be open to other publishers and independent creators. Do you see the contradiction? If your team's application of the software makes DEC unique and there will be DEC produced without your team's involvement, what's unique about DEC, itself?

DM: Any team can use the Active Reader, but they would have to build their own version of the comics reader. Active Reader is open to anyone, but the DEC is unique to Uproar and our team is unique to the DEC. We are dedicated to making this a worthwhile experience for our readers — and we would invite anyone to come and give us competition; a stampede of horses runs faster than a single horse!

SP!: Let's assume interactive comics stand to change comics forever (which is a debate unto itself). If that were to happen, shouldn't Tall Chair (creators of Active Reader [http://activereader.net/]) and other software developers, who introduced the concept of interactive comics and created the tools creators use to make their comics interactive, get the credit?

DM: I see what you mean, but essentially, Active Reader is an engine on an engine. You wouldn't give the artist's credit to Photoshop, or the paints for a painting he produced himself. Yes they created a tool, but it's a tool that can create tools, so we built our own tools which will help the creativity of our team.

SP!: I believe you have something planned which will give Uproar fans a new way to experience your comics and, for that, I congratulate you. Claiming that DEC will change comics forever, effectively calls into question what every other creator on the planet is currently doing. Such big claims naturally invite skepticism. Make your case for how DEC is going to change comics forever.

DM: People screamed that theatres would close when TV was invented! We live in a multimedia world: videos, images, audio… but nothing ties it together with our love of comics. We imagine a digital comic book, like we all dreamed we would have when we were kids — with games, animations and much more. We can tie everything together in what we like to call "Omnimedia"! This is how the future will experience and engage with the world. Uproar Comics couldn't wait for the future, so we brought it to the present... so that we could tell our stories and let people experience how stories should be told, and will be told, from now on! Digital Experience Comics... Comics of the Future.

'Zombie Hi 8: Dead On Arrival' is now available at: http://www.uproarcomics.co.uk/shopping/

This Preview brought to you by:

Writer
Douglas Owen

$7 from every sale through CreateSpace between release date and September will go to JDRF's (Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation) Ride for a Cure.

-Prologue-

Christine cried out in agony once again as her body convulsed with pain. She had been in labor for over a day, and yet the child still would not come out of her. She laid on the bed in the back room of the brothel with sweat beading on her brow. Flashes of lightning lit the room through the only window.

"You must push when your body tells you to," said Lattice, the midwife Madam Kateryn had called in. "If you do not push, the child will not come out." Shaking her head Lattice looked up at Kateryn. "Is the girl deaf or just stupid from the birthing?"

"Mind your tongue," said Kateryn. She had never called on Lattice to help with the birthing of children in the brothel before, but the last few days had been unusually dank and a storm had rolled in. Today the clouds had erupted with lightning and sleet, making it a truly dreary day. Midwife Polis would not come when called on, saying the weather was evil, so she settled on Lattice for the birthing of this child. "She is young and does not know the ways of birthing."

It was true, Christine was only sixteen years. She had no siblings, being orphaned at the age of eight. Kateryn had taken her in then, promising to care for her. She had cooked and cleaned, and when her body had flowered, Christine was put to work with her ankles in the air, making the men feel special as only a woman can. Kateryn had made a lot of money off the auction of Christine's maidenhood. She told the girl the money would pay for any problems she would have, even if she grew large with child.

"She sleeps again. Maybe we can get a little rest as well. This child is so stubborn; it does not want to come out on such a night as this. May that I did not have to either," Lattice slurred. "Can I get a cup of mead or even wine before she awakes, just to help steady me if you mind?"

"No," Kateryn said flatly. "I will have one of the girls bring you some tea. That will help you stay awake for this child when it comes."

"Be as you may. Mead would taste better though."

Christine's eyes opened slowly, squinting as a flash of lightning lit up the room. She caught a flicker of something, just over by the door. There was a figure standing there watching, waiting. She tried to look closer, but could not focus on it.

"Who… Who are you - AAAAAA!" Her body wracked with a spasm of pain and she arched her back.

"It looks like the little one is trying to stay inside her," Lattice said. "And she is seeing things as well. Have you slipped her something while I was not watching?"

"It would be best you watch your charge till she brings forth her child, instead of making wild accusations."

Lattice frowned. She would rather have had the mead; the chill of the night from the storm was getting into the bones of her hands, making them ache. She flexed her fingers into fists and then relaxed them, a lightning strike of pain shot up into her arms this time.

"The storm is what's keeping this child in her. It's scared of the lightning, and the thunder's not helping much either." Lattice wiped her nose on her sleeve to remove a drop of sweat that had formed there. Kateryn wondered why Lattice was sweating so profusely. Kateryn was the brothel owner and madam, just like her mother and her mother's mother before her. It was said her family had always owned the brothel, putting the first born girl in charge of it after she had spent a year on her back once she flowered. Her maiden hood was auctioned off and she was put to work so she would know what it was like to be a working girl in the brothel, thus never forgetting where she came from. Once

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Kateryn gave birth to a girl she was trained in running the brothel. It gives each of the owners through their lineage a good understanding of what the girls go through who work there.

"She's back asleep now." Lattice looked about, and as her eyes drifted to the door she saw him, standing tall and proud in a grey cloak, his hood pulled up over his head cast a shadow across his face. "A Wooder!" she said, making the protective sign. "What are you doing here?"

Kateryn looked towards the door and gasped. She had not seen a Wooder for years. The ancient order of healers only seemed to come when there was hurt or death about, always looking for children newly born to take for service as either Spears or Wooders themselves.

The Wooder stood, not moving. He appeared willing to wait for the inevitable. He was tall, standing well over six feet, a dark complexion and appeared comely, from what the women could see. His face had a shadow of a beard, flecked with salt and pepper, he was mid age, possibly around forty. He looked fit, in fine physical shape. He filled out the shoulders of the cloak and stood with his arms crossed. Scars covered what showed of his fore arms, signs of training when he was first taken as a child. It is said a Wooder trains first as a Spear, but when any of the tests are failed, the child forfeits the privilege of serving the Realm as a protector, and instead become a servant of healing. They also searched for those children who will become Spears.

He waited, with the knowledge the girl in front of him would die tonight in child birth. He did not know how he knew, he just did. He waited.

Christine woke. She focused on the Wooder.

"I will not survive this night will I?" she asked of him.

"No," he said, emotion starting to show as his voice softened. His mind thought of the mother he had never known.

"My child?"

"He will come with me," the Wooder said. "He is destined for greatness. He will become a Spear. He will serve the Realm and bring you honor. All mothers of Spears are honored, no matter their walk in life." He stepped forward, walking between the bed and Kateryn. "One can accept what happens if one knows great good will come of it." He knelt, taking Christine's hand in his.

She felt the calluses from years of long training with weapons, the muscles from many days exercising to the point of dropping. Her eyes searched the shadows of his cloak to see what he looked like, but his face was still hidden in shadows.

"I will see the one who comforts my soul…" she started, but her body was hit with another bout of pain from the birthing.

"The baby finally comes!" exclaimed Lattice.

The room lit up from the flash of a massive bolt of lightning. The illumination showed Christine the face of the Wooder, and she calmed. He was a handsome man, with a kind face. His eyes told her he was sincere with his claim. They also showed great sorrow, knowing she would not be long in this world.

"Will you look after him?" she asked, gasping with the pain.

"I will not, but there will be many who will love him. He will train hard, and he will gain heart. He will know much love from his companions and friends. He will be a just and fair man who will have the love of the Realm at his feet. He will save many lives, and be a great man. You will be proud as you see him from the seat of the Great Protector, the one brother of the Five who looks over us. Be at peace, mother of Spear, bring forth your child. I will be here for you and guide you to the afterlife."

Her body shook again. Teeth gritting with a force that made her wonder if they would shatter. Christine pushed with all her remaining strength. The Wooder kept a firm grip on her hand with his and reached behind the woman's

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Writer
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back, elevating her shoulders and whispering into her ear. He recited the ancient sayings to assure her all would be well. It was a beautiful sound, his voice, as he sang the ancient lyrics:

To be a Spear is to protect the Realm
From those who mean it ill.
To be a Spear is to protect the people
From those who will do them harm.
To be a Spear is to give up everything
For the good of the Realm.
To be a Spear is to be the one
Who stands between the Darkness and the Light
To be a Spear is to be a weapon
Wielded for good against evil.

The litany seemed to comfort Christine, as Lattice pulled the child from between her thighs. It was pink and covered with blood spots from the birthing. With a great effort the child coughed out the fluid from its lungs and let out a wailing cry.

"He is born," said the Wooder. "A Spear is born. Show him your love before you pass, child. Show him how much the world will love him."

The Wooder reached and took the child from Lattice's hands, bringing him to Christine's breast. She took him, kissed him and loved him. The child found her breast and latched on to the nipple. He sucked his first meal from his mother's breast, the last meal she would be able to give him. It was full of all the love she could give and he took it gladly.

"She still bleeds," cried Kateryn, looking down at the bed covers.

"She bleeds all her blood for the child," said Lattice. "She will not survive this birth. The healing is beyond me."

The Wooder pulled back his hood and Christine looked from her child to see his eyes, they were full of compassion and love. She knew she was dying, she felt herself emptying from the birth. It was peaceful, seeing his eyes looking at her with respect. She did not know a man could look at her that way, she was a whore. Men only saw her for what she was; but this man, this Wooder, he seemed to look into her soul. He saw what others did not. He saw she was the mother of a Spear.

He bent forward and kissed her on the forehead. "Sleep now, mother of Spear, your child will be taken care of, he will be loved, he will be fed, he will be clothed, and he will save us all."

Christine closed her eyes as the world grew dark. Moments later, the last of her life blood flowed out from between her legs, and her existence slipped out of her body.

The Wooder said a prayer to the Five Gods who created the world and asked them to take Christine into their care. When he finished, he took the child from her breast and wrapped it in a cloth produced from inside his cloak. He stood and turned to face Kateryn.

"Take care to inter the body of the mother of this Spear with honor; the Five Gods will be watching," he said, voice full of sorrow.

The Wooder then lifted his hood over his head, cradled the child close to his chest and wrapped his cloak about them both to stave off the storm. He paused for a second, head bowed in contemplation.

"His name is Thomasyn Saye, and he will be a Great Spear. Remember him for her, and if the Five smile, he will save us all." With that, he opened the door just as silently as he had before, leaving the two women with the body of the mother of a Spear.

To support this effort, and enjoy the rest of the story:
http://www.amazon.com/Spear-Flight-Volume-Douglas-Owen/dp/0988086468

The Fishbowl Chronicles—Pt.1

Article by: Mark Turner

Welcome to the Fish Bowl Chronicles. My name is Mark Turner and I want to create comics. It is as simple as that. You know that feeling that you have after putting down an incredibly well crafted comic or graphic novel — the one that leaves you either itching for more or saying to yourself, "I want to do THAT!"? Well, for me it is almost like a rash. (Don't worry, I don't think it is contagious….okay, well, maybe it is.)

I've written for the past three years as a freelance reporter, covering the comic book beat in the SF Bay area for examiner.com, co-written the script for a short film that was an official selection for the LA International Film Festival, had a few screenplays in various competitions over the years, and even worked on developing a speculative concept at one point, for Anime producer Taro Maki . All in an effort to try and scratch at the yearning to tell stories

The "Golden Unicorn" for me, however, has always been comics. The idea of a collaborative process that creates a medium with implied motion, the ability to compress or decompress time, a medium that can explore worlds that no Hollywood budget could ever create on screen and offers opportunities to work with some of the most gifted and visionary artists walking the face of the Earth is too alluring not to haunt my dreams.

All of which brings us here to the Fish Bowl. I've got an idea (well, several actually, but one is further along than the others) that I want to see roll across the pages of a comic. Much like Dr. Frankenstein, I am bent on seeing this concept pulled screaming and kicking from the corners of my cobweb-addled mind and given monstrous, twisted life. Easy enough to state; another matter to execute. There is no middle ground. (Or, to quote a great philosopher, Yoda, "*Do or do not...There is no try*".)

So, it is with that tenet that I embark on this great adventure with the intention of not only sharing the ultimate end product with you, dear reader, but also the journey. Think about it as a fan: how often do we consider what it really takes to put together a comic (from inception to completion to what ends up in our hands)? There are so many elements that go into creating not only a comic, but a successful comic marketing campaign, that it boggles the mind. Here, amid the lines of this column, you will witness the trials, tribulations and challenges (with a few victories thrown in for good measure, I hope) of an industry "newb" taking on the task of launching a comic book. This means scripting the story, finding an artistic team, determining how the project will reach you the reader (digital, print, or both), and so much more. You'll read interviews with those who have come before, who may have a piece or two of sage advice to help enlighten this unenlightened one. Book recommendations, tools of the trade and resources, convention coverage, all will grace the page, in hope of giving fans an inside track on how it is done and how some of these uncovered resources either help or hurt our ultimate end goal.

Most importantly, you, the reader are welcome to reach out and participate in creating a dialog where independent creators, aspiring creators, and fans can all come together to strengthen the industry and product. It won't always be sunshine and a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, nor will it be doom and gloom every month, but it will be a learning experience for those who take the time to stop by and spend a few moments with this column.

So, until the next episode, stay tuned!

(The test pattern will soon be replaced with our regularly scheduled programming.)

Mark Turner is a resident of Oakland, CA and is a freelance reporter covering the comic book beat for examiner.com. In his spare time, he immerses himself in the colorful adventures he finds in the pages of comic books and film.

To check out Mark's current endeavors, visit:

http://markoftheblacktide.blogspot.com/

http://www.examiner.com/comic-books-in-oakland/mark-turner

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20 Questions with Mad Anthony

Article by: John Wilson

Are they truly, irrevocably mad or just crazy about the music? We'll find out as John Wilson sits down with Mad Anthony's lead singer and guitarist Ringo Jones and hits him with Twenty Questions.

SPI: What was your first experience with music?

RJ: When I was a kid, my parents had an upright piano in the living room and they'd put on Beatles or Little Richard records and I would dance around. Over time, I became a little bit of a performer and would dance around and play the piano (I didn't know how to play). I still remember slammin' those keys and acting a fool.

SPI: How did that experience influence you desire to play music professionally?

RJ: My parents always had music in the house. My dad played drums and guitar, my mom would sing, my sister grew up to be an amazing musician and still plays a variety of instruments and has a beautiful voice. To be honest, my family always thought I'd play baseball. I was an amazing athlete when I was younger. Music didn't really become a real hobby until I was a teenager and then it got serious in college. It all started with a drum kit I got for Christmas, one year. My dad and atep-mom scraped together enough dough to buy me an old 1980s Remo Quadura drum set and I spent all of my free time in the basement wailing away. Unfortunately, I never developed much as drummer, but I really found my niche writing songs and singing. I still love drums, though!

SPI: Is this your first band? If not, what is the musical history?

RJ: I had a few bands in high school. I had started to move away from sports and play more and more. My friends and I started little punk bands to play house parties and just have something to do. Living in the suburbs was boring! Once I got to college, things really started to take off. I played with a band called Fatboat and we were playing bars in Athens, OH (Ohio University) as often as possible. We started booking tours and I realized this was what I wanted to do. As we graduated and people moved to different cities, the band started to fizzle and the

project took a back burner.

SPI: What is the origin story of your band?

RJ: Mad Anthony started out of necessity. We (Adam and I) were toiling around with songs and playing shows under a different name, just figuring things out. As we built Mad Anthony and started playing with different guys, we finally had enough material and the right lineup to call ourselves a real band. Thus, Mad Anthony was born.

SPI: How did you choose the name "Mad Anthony"?

RJ: I still think naming your band is the worst and most delicate situation for any young band. When we finally stumbled upon Mad Anthony, I don't think anyone in the band was 100 percent in love with the name. There's a street in our favorite part of town in Cincinnati named Mad Anthony. We frequented a club around the street and when we did some research on the name, we found out General "Mad" Anthony Wayne was a pretty infamous and awesome war hero during the American Revolutionary War and had some great stories to go along with it.

SPI: The name has a historical or British feel to it… Any correlations there?

RJ: Lots of history surrounding his war career — more than I could ever write here — but it's worth a Google search.

SPI: What was it like to play together?

RJ: The chemistry between us is pretty magical. I'm extremely lucky to play with Adam and Marc. Both are very talented and have a unique sound. We get along like brothers; people often comment on how well we get along. It's good that we do, 'cause we spend a ton of time together.

SPI: What do you think makes you unique as a band?

RJ: We take great pride in our live show, but there're a few things that make us unique. We perform as a three-piece rock

(Continued on page 28)

band with no bass. Two guitars and drums. We've really crafted our tone and our gear around filling out the sound without adding another member or instrument. Not that we don't love bass — it's probably my favorite instrument — but we feel fortunate to have the chemistry we have and we don't want to mess that up.

SPT: How would you describe your music to someone that has never heard it?

RJ: I always say we're a rock 'n roll band, but if asked to pinpoint it, we're somewhere between grunge, garage, punk, and stoner rock. We all grew up listening to different things. My favorite band as a kid was The Who, so I bring a lot of that to the table, but I also love 90s grunge and current desert rock bands. I think we sound like Toadies meets Queens of The Stone Age with Eric Burden from The Animals on lead vocals.

SPT: What is your process for creating new music?

RJ: We lock the doors and just play. Our best material is a group effort. Sometimes, I'll bring a song to practice and the band will finish it, but I like when we all get together, clear our minds of all the stuff we're used to playing, and start rocking when there's nothing left in the tank. That's the creative stuff, that's the stuff without derivatives — and it's unique and original.

SPT: Do you currently have a piece that you would say is your best?

RJ: Our current record is the best thing we have that's been released. BUT! I cannot wait to start playing, recording, and releasing our new stuff. We're hard at work touring the current record, but we already have a batch of new material we're refining and rewriting for our next effort. That will be our best stuff!

SPT: What has been the best experience that you have had as a band? What made it so good?

RJ: The first time we went to Toronto for Canadian Music Week in 2011 was magical. We were still a young band, and playing a major music festival like that really put things in perspective for us. We met a ton of great bands, made lifelong friends, and launched our music to a new level. It definitely changed us as a band.

SPT: What are the worst experiences that you have had as a band? What went wrong?

RJ: There're enough ups and downs in rock 'n roll to fill the national library with stories. Before Marc joined the band, we were playing with our good friend Tony Bryant. Tony was a phenomenal drummer. He played with his heart and soul, and really had his own sound. Unfortunately, Tony took his own life before the release of our first full-length record "...I Spent All My Money on Speed Metal," and the band hit rock bottom.

We contemplated hanging it up — and probably would have without the support of the great music community in Cincinnati and Tony's family ushering us forward.

Tony was a huge part of our success and we miss him dearly every day. Marc, who agreed to play the release show for Tony's last work with Mad Anthony, was a friend of Tony's. After playing a few shows together, we knew we had something special and we carry on to honor Tony and his family. He gave so much to us, we feel obligated to pay it forward with our music.

SPT: You are not yet a "signed" band... Is this something that you aspire to or is it even on your radar?

RJ: If Warner Bros. showed up on my doorstep tomorrow and said "Sign this contract; we're gonna make you the biggest band in the world," I would sign on. BUT! We realized that we don't need that to live our dream. The music industry is broken. The current model doesn't work, but hitting the road, playing shows, writing quality songs, and promoting your band does work! So, that's what we do. We can pay our bills as long as we keep playing. It's exhausting, we're poor, we're homeless... but we're HAPPY! Sometimes you just gotta go for it.

SPT: What are your plans for the future of the band?

RJ: We plan to keep on playing. Writing more songs, playing more shows, making new friends... Hopefully, a new record is on the horizon, but there's no immediate rush; we're just living the dream at the moment, letting the game come to us.

(Continued on page 29)

SPI: Is there one image or symbol that you think best describes your band's artistic idea?

RJ: We've adopted an image of Pan, the mythological god of the wild, be it animals, nature, nymphs or rustic music. We like the imagery, because we consider ourselves wild and Pan himself was half beast. We feel that way about our music and our musical expression.

SPI: What have you done to promote your band?

RJ: You name it, we've probably done it. Mailing out posters, doing interviews, posting on any website we can find, doing radio shows, getting radio play, setting up on corners downtown, playing shows, connecting with other bands, etc, etc, etc. We do what we can to spread the word, but our best tool is still word of mouth. Come to the live show, experience it first-hand. The raw energy and attitude of the live show is unparalleled by any band I've seen.

SPI: Do you have any desire for your music to be used in other venues, like commercials, TV, or movies?

RJ: We've had some songs placed in independent films and documentaries that have gone on to have great success at Film Festival and rotation on PBS. We're always down for more, though. We like working with other media and any time we can expose our music to a new audience is advantageous for us.

SPI: What are some of the gigs that you will be playing in the near future?

RJ: We recently ended a 65-day tour that took us from Cincinnati, all the way through the eastern half of Canada, and as far west as Topeka, KS.
Right now, we're in the middle of a 40-day tour that goes up the East Coast of the USA (Baltimore, Philly, NYC, Boston, New Jersey Maine, and more) into Canada, and back through Ontario, before spitting us back into Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio.

SPI: Where can people find you on the web?

RJ: We're everywhere!
http://www.madanthonyband.com
http://madanthony.bandcamp.com/
http://facebook.com/madanthonyband
Youtube.com/madanthonyband
Please add us on Facebook and visit the website for more information and to find out when we'll be visiting your city.

MAD ANTHONY

Recommended if you like Queens of The Stone Age, The Misfits, Hot Snakes

Mad Anthony

MEMBERS

Ringo Jones
Vocals, Guitar

Adam Flaig
Guitar, Vocals

Marc Sherlock
Drums

"These songs are fist-pounding, headbanging rock'n'roll. The melodies are great, the band is tight, and the overall cool is top-notch. Each of these songs stand on their own.." - **Independent Clauses**

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BIO

The ferocious three pieces that make up Cincinnati's volatile rock n' roll unit, Mad Anthony are driven and true. They have enough gumption to fill their big yellow van till it burst at the seams, and enough pride to carry themselves across the midwest to hundreds of shows year-in and year-out, grabbing headlining spots at North by Northeast, Midpoint Music Festival and Canadian Music Week, they're road worn and quality tested. Dropping 70,000 units of their single 'Bear Attack' in Classic Rock Magazine across Europe, placing songs in the PBS distributed documentary Roller Derby Queens, and regular rotation on radio airwaves in the towns they infect; Mad Anthony is the RustBelt Revivalists that the next generation of Rock n' Roll needs.

MARKETABILITY

Sideshow (Compilation) (UK)
70,000 Units

Festivals:
North by Northeast,
Canadian Music Week,
Midpoint Music Festival & more

Cincinnati Entertainment Award (2010)

TV/Film Placement:
No More Blood, Radius, Fallen, Roller Derby Queens, Reel Cincinnati

Played with Toadies, Gringo Star, Electric Six, Flash Lightning, Big Business, Torche, and more

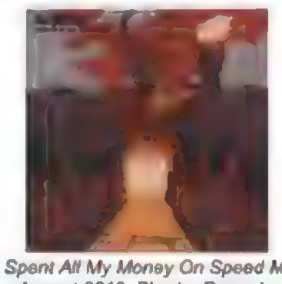
Music Videos for 'Bear Attack' & 'The Solution to The Indian Problem'

"Playing with intensity, (Mad Anthony) played the small Cherry's stage like it was a multi thousand seat arena."
- Nadia Elkharadly, Toronto Examiner

"They are living proof that real rock and roll isn't dead"
- Bill Goodman, The Soda Shop

Mad Anthony, June 2012
Phratry Records

MA/TYB 7" Split, August 2011
XMAS Cactus Records



...I Spent All My Money On Speed Metal
August 2010, Phratry Records

Mad Anthony EP, June 2008
Phratry Records

INTRODUCING: THE D.E.C*
*DIGITAL EXPERIENCE COMIC
A new interactive app from Uproar Comics combining 2d and 3d animation, audio, unlockable content and more to deliver a new user experience for the reading of comics on tablet platforms
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A Written View: Characters and Point of View

Article by: Douglas Owen

It's hard to tell which characters a reader will find endearing. My test readers liked the John character in Spear and I was trying to get them to like Bethany. I wanted them to feel for the mother of the main character, Thomasyn, but they cared more for a subordinate character. I don't know why, I can only assume. It comes down to who they relate to best in your work. And if one character is more believable than the others, they will relate to that character.

So how do I make my characters more likeable or, dare I say, loveable? I think it will surprise you. Give them something that, at first, does not stand out to the reader, but causes a little internal conflict. Something to set them aside from the cookie cutter characters others may create. It doesn't have to be big, just different. For example, in the Rowlinson Inc series, my protagonist, John Rowlinson, has a dislike of zero-g and crowds. So this space-faring hero must overcome these two obstacles in his day-to-day life. Do these two traits have anything to do with the story? Not really; they are just part of his personality, or what makes him, as a character, click. His little glitches only come out to the reader when he is confronted with a trip to a space station, which means time in zero-g. Later, he is faced with a crowd of people gathering around him and his love interest during their first date. He steers them away from the crowded area and, keeping with his dislike of large groups, to a more personal section of the station.

Realistic, yes. But how did I come up with it?

The dislike of zero-g was natural; most people would hate it. No up or down, no way of using your inner ear to keep your balance... the perpetual "spins," as I put it. The dislike of crowds, well, that one was a lot easier. It is one of my own dislikes. Don't get me wrong, I love people. I just don't like being in a crowded place. So, it was easy for me to use my own personality quirk in my main character.

His nemesis, Shalain, became an endearing character for a bad guy. Why? Because I built him that way. His personality was forced on him by brainwashing. He was really a good person put into a bad person's body. The undeniable need to hunt and kill was programmed into him. On several occasions, he shows the humanity of a good man, while pursuing the death of his target. Maybe your antagonist has something that sets them apart, like a love of kittens, causing them to act vengefully when they notice someone being cruel to the little fluffy wonders of joy. Whatever you choose, I am sure it will make the reader want to love them, even when they are the bad guys.

But what else will it do for you? It will build a believable character, not a clichéd stereotype that the reader will call you on. Consider the prim-and-proper supermodel mother who secretly licks the icing bowl for the cupcakes, only to swallow a laxative to evacuate her body. Try an office worker who strips down at night to become a cross dresser. Maybe the woman cop bursting at the seams as an enforcer being a closet girly girl when she gets home, trying to be the polar opposite of what she is at work. Dimensions you really don't have to expand on, but show to the reader to make them understand, the characters are real.

Point of View

One of the hardest parts of writing is keeping the point of view straight. I struggle with it all the time and many authors have the same issue.

When I write, I play the scene in my head and transfer it to the computer via my fingers. I try to put down as much detail as my mind's eye sees, with regard to what the characters are doing, the look of the place, the feel of the atmosphere, and who says what. In doing so, I violate the Point of View. On my edit, I clean it up. Showing what the character I'm using as my focus would see. It centers the point of view. Try this small section out for size:

I open my eyes and focus, just in time to see Bill's fist coming at me. This is going to hurt, but I don't move. The impact is hard, but not as hard as it usually is when he hits me. I feel my jaw loosen from the impact, and my head bounces off the locker behind me.

"Leave me alone," I whimper. Asshole. "Someone help–"

Another punch strikes my stomach and I struggle to keep my lunch from making a second appearance. My legs almost give out and my back slides across the lockers. Desperate, I try to escape the beating Bill is inflicting upon me, but my legs are weak and I feel disoriented.

Bill is the resident bully. He finds enjoyment in fighting, but only the kids he knows he can take. He never picks on the bigger kids and I have turned out to be his favorite punching bag, for some reason. Maybe because I can't fight back. It is a mystery why; I just can't find it in me to strike this shit. Maybe it's because he is molested by his father? It would explain why he lashes out at everyone smaller than him. He is physically stronger than all the other boys in class. I don't know why. Maybe his dad makes him lift

(Continued on page 31)

weights before he whips him, but it's only a guess.

I've almost made it to the hallway. Just a few more steps and the crowd of pimply-faced kids will call for attention from one of the teachers. Bill will have to stop hitting me then.

The above is from a work in progress called "I Time Travel" and is written in the first person POV. It's easy to see this, for the main character is telling the story and, as the writer, I am showing you the scene through his eyes. I don't tell you kids from the cafeteria are coming to watch, for the main character would not know where they are coming from, just know they are coming from somewhere. The main character would not know what is going through Bill's head, nor would he know the thoughts of others, so the POV is preserved.

It could change, though, by sticking something in using Bill's POV, like changing the first paragraph a little. Examine the difference and tell me if it makes sense:

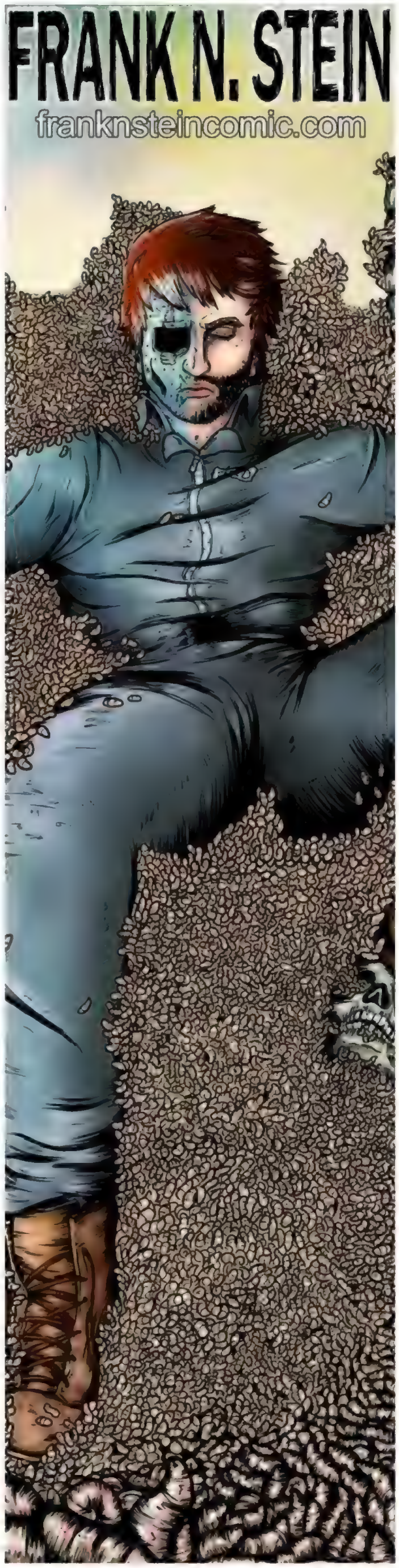
I open my eyes and focus, just in time to see Bill's fist coming at me. This is going to hurt, but I don't move. The impact is hard, but not as hard as it usually is when he hits me. I feel my jaw loosen from the impact, and my head bounces off the locker behind me. Bill smiles as he feels satisfaction from the hit. Inflicting pain makes him feel better about himself.

Notice the change? The story went out of POV to explain why the antagonist was doing what he was doing. Does it work? Yes, but it is not right. There is no way the protagonist in the story would know why Bill is doing what he is doing, thus it should not be in the story. Maybe in the future, the protagonist finds out, but not till I show you how he finds out.

Structuring the POV in your story is important. Make it work, and your story will be that much better for it.

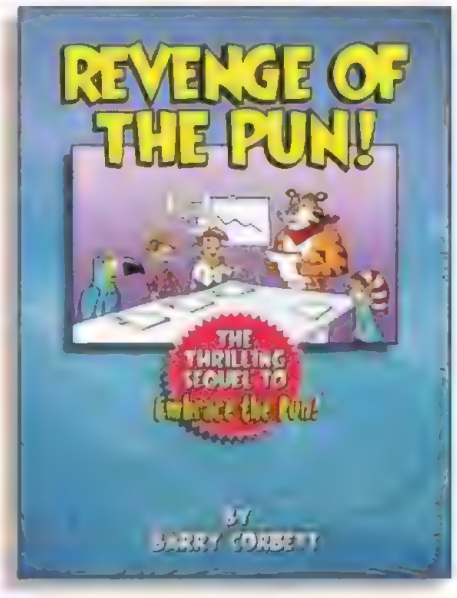
Next issue:

"Where are you going" and "The hook"



Embrace your Inner Punster!

Barry Corbett's 2nd tribute to the "lowest form of humor" features panel cartoons that have appeared in *Reader's Digest, Barrons, First Magazine, American Legion, Christianity Today, Lacrosse Magazine, Medical Economics, Kid Zones, The Artist's Magazine, True West,* and many local newspapers.



Silver Medal – ForeWord Reviews Magazine
2010 Book of the Year Awards

Bronze Medal – Independent Publisher Magazine
2011 IPPY Awards

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REVIEWS!

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Our review system is managed online, so if you want anything reviewed, you will need to at least be able to send an e-mail...although our reviewers are authorized to collect things for review in person. SP! reviewers should have CARDS or copies of SP! to show that they are indeed who they say they are. Our reviewers are instructed to be reviewing for the READER, not the CREATOR...so we are sorry if a reviewer does not give a review that would boost your sales. Reviewers are ranked and given clout by reader votes online, and we won't print reviews for long from someone who people aren't finding their reviews useful. That said, we also instruct our reviewers to give constructive feedback and not be mean. Everyone starts somewhere, and SP! Is set up to be one of the first places a publisher may get a real review.

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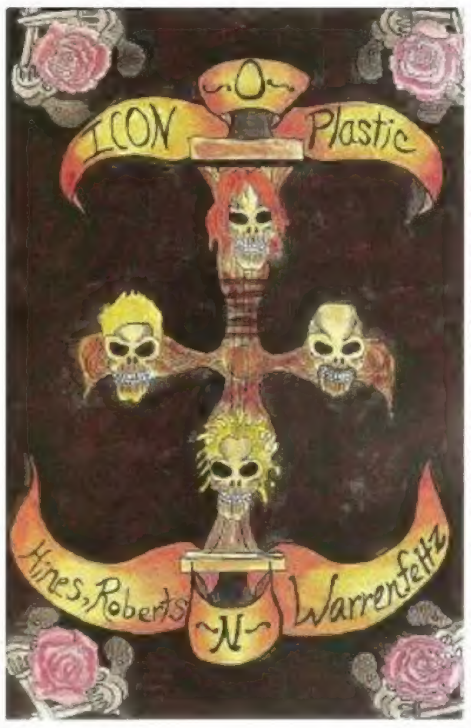
More people soon!?!

Join us!



A.L.B. Books
Icon-o-Plastic

20pg Full Size comic, B+W. First Printing, 2012. By Stephen Hines, Jacob Warrenfeltz, and Rafer Roberts. Front cover by Jade Wilson.

$2.50 cover price. Mature Readers
Seek out at: http://www.stephenhines.org

Review: Ok! Something I can sink my teeth into a bit here. This book is definitely on my recommend list. It is well written, well drawn, and well packaged. It has artistic merit, and it gives us a view into the creation of the comic to see the people who made it with perspective. It's a book about a band and it speaks to the realities and fantasies that surround a rise to and fall from fame, in a creative and unique way.

So, assuming a story like that interests you, please, go now — go out of your way to get a copy and support the creative people who put this together. —IS

Big Daddy Press
Big Daddy Press Presents #1

36pg Full Size comic, B+W. First Printing, 2011. By Alex Barth, Jimbo Tamoro, Kevin Barth, and Christine Lee Ho.

$4.99 cover price. Mature Readers
No way to contact in book and not found searching internet.

Review: In all reality, there is only so much time I will spend trying to look up a person or publishing company when they have no contact info in the book. If a basic search for both the company name and the person's name turns up nothing in any combination, the publisher is simply doing a HORRIBLE job promoting themselves and so, why should I spend my time promoting them, when they can't promote themselves, even

slightly? So, instead of spending time here talking about the creator's work, which is definitely amateur-level, though it had some redeeming qualities, let's review some more DON'Ts of publishing.

Don't run advertisements that have contact information, when you don't put any in your book for yourself.

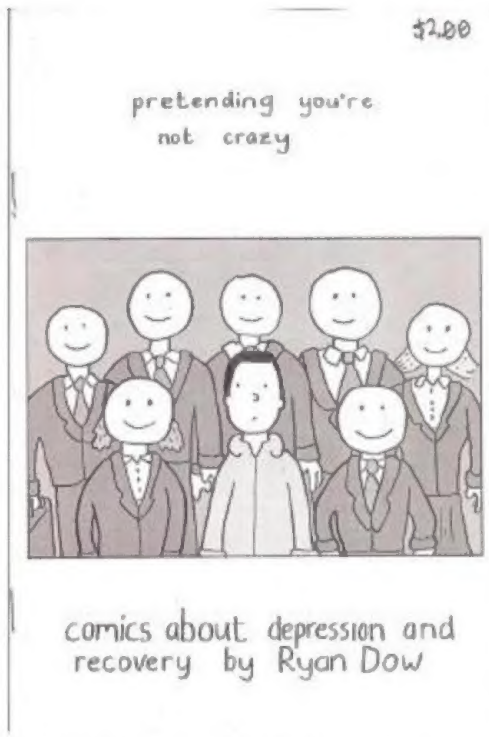
Don't tell people in an editorial that this is indeed your first effort at publishing and how hard it was and that you now know why so many people fail… and then forget to promote yourself in any way anywhere, to guarantee that you fail.

Don't print your prize book with Ka-Blam. Seriously. I knew the second I picked this book up, BEFORE I turned it over to see the full page ad for them, that Ka-Blam had something to do with the really, really bad bleed setup on the cover of the book. If they cared about publishers in any way, they would have REJECTED the file and said do it right. But no… they will print anything, no matter how badly set up… so, remember that when you go to spend your money, publishers. They are NOT going to tell you, "Hey, you could fix this file in two minutes," so that when you get your order you don't go, "OUCH! That looks like crap!" They are going to print it, let you see that it printed like crap — so that you will need to fix it and then print more that don't look like crap, hopefully. Because even if it is set up right, you still may get bad copies. I see a lot of their books with tilt — which means the person trimming the books really doesn't care if the book is in the trimmer right… Anyway! Off the soap box, again.

Why do I end up spending more time talking about books that I can't recommend than I do those that I can? Ok, stop reading, go find a review where I raved about the quality of the content in few words, 'cause that means the book was really good. Alex Barth, if you ever do a search for your name online and find this review… I hope you know I said what I

(Continued on page 34)

(Continued from page 33)
have here to help you, and others, to not make the mistakes you have here. —IS



Dow, Ryan
Pretending You're Not Crazy

32pg. Digest, B+W. First Printing, 2011. By Ryan Dow.

$2.00 cover price. Seek out at: http://ryandow.com/ic/

Review: It's been a while since I dug into the review box, I know. But I'm going to be buckling down and doing at least one a day, and hope to have some new people joining me in doing so, so… let's get this all back on track.

This comic is a good read. The author delves into his views on getting over depression with raw honesty, really delivering an experience that lets us get to know him, relate to him, and otherwise share in his perspective. The artwork is really very simple… it's not anything to say wow about, but it does fit the tone of the book.

I'm not crazy about the packaging of the book. It comes across very tossed-together and lacks any of the basics of publishing that would actually make this a publication — and not just a big flyer advertising his website. People, even on a hobby level, should really take the time to add some sort of "published by" information; your name on the cover and a copyright notice on the back is not really enough to say "This is a book I'm proud to sell you. "Even coming right out and saying, "This book is a teaser for my ongoing webcomic series," elevates it past flyer status… so think about adding something along the lines of a "published by" spot in your books. People will take you more seriously as an artist, if you show that you take putting your work in front of them just as seriously as you address the subject matter of your work.

So, good read, worth a look… would like to see it developed more as a publication. —IS

Old World Comics
Out There #1

24pg Full Size comic, B+W. First Printing, September 2011. By Todd Goodman and Ferry Susanto.

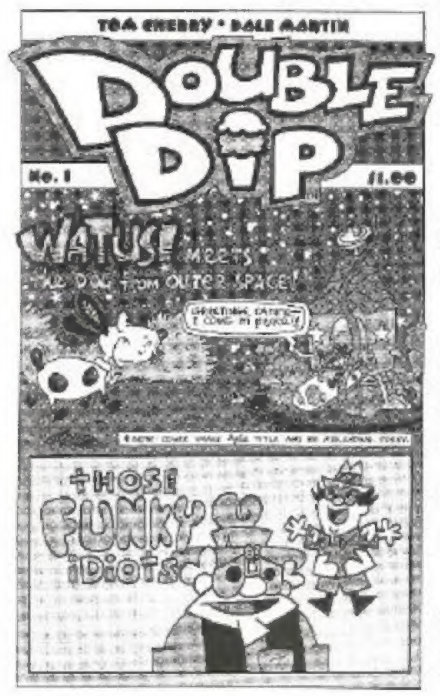
No price in book. Seek further info at: http://www.oldworldcomics.com

Review: There are a number of interesting things about this book, and a number of flaws. I'm not sure if this completely tipped the balance toward recommending it so, let's examine.

Let's go with the flaws first: no cover price, listed website has no info about this book — but does have many others. The printing job is pretty sloppy. I see many glaring file errors — page shifts, bleeds not done right, and then I see the inside back cover — and it says Ka-Blam — and I know why. Folks… I don't know how many book's I've seen printed through them that have these types of printing errors, but they will continue to print without caring if there are errors, as long as we keep sending them $$ to do so. Their business model is not set up to promote quality. Ok, off that soapbox.

Art-wise, there is an over-all beginner nature to the work. Facial constructions, perspectives, backgrounds, and shading/lightsources could all use a lot more practice. But, in general, it does convey the story well and has some really good spots too. There is talent here. Will be interested to see it develop.

So now, the good part of this book is the writing. There are just two characters talking throughout, but they convey, in nicely conversational ways, the settings, moods, and personalities behind each one. And the subject matter: Point Pleasant and Mothman is a good backdrop to what is actually going on here. The book is B+W until the very end, where Mothman appears. This is used to great effect; it actually took me by surprise. So in those aspects, and having thought about it as I've written this, I am going to recommend this one. I just wish there was more info on the website about it, and I don't know if the promised second issue was done. Regardless, though, it does seem like they have continued to put some interesting things out at Old World, so check them out.—IS



Smeary Soapbox Press AND Cherry Flavored Comics
Double Dip #1

16pg. Digest, B+W. First printing, April 2011. By Tom Cherry and Dale Martin.

$1.00 cover price. Seek further info at: www.smearysoapboxpress.com/ and: tomcherryexperience.blogspot.com/

Review: This book has a lot going for it. While it's not a direct crossover of the characters of these two publishers, it is a package that draws each publisher's readers to check out the other's work. As a package, it shines. It's really put together well and it shows the reason I continually point out to publishers they need to package their books right. To any publisher reading this whose packaging I have ever bashed: Get a copy of this, JUST to see how it's done.

Now, as for the content presented: it's solid. Both stories are well written, engaging, funny, and show the style and character of the creators. Tom's art is not as fleshed out with backgrounds and such as Dale's, but I liked Tom's story

(Continued on page 35)

(Continued from page 34)

just a tad more. It is a good read and so, to the readers out there looking for a taste of something fun, here's a chance to double up on your experience. And really, you can't beat the price. Both artists have more at their websites as well. Check them out! — IS

Urchin Collective

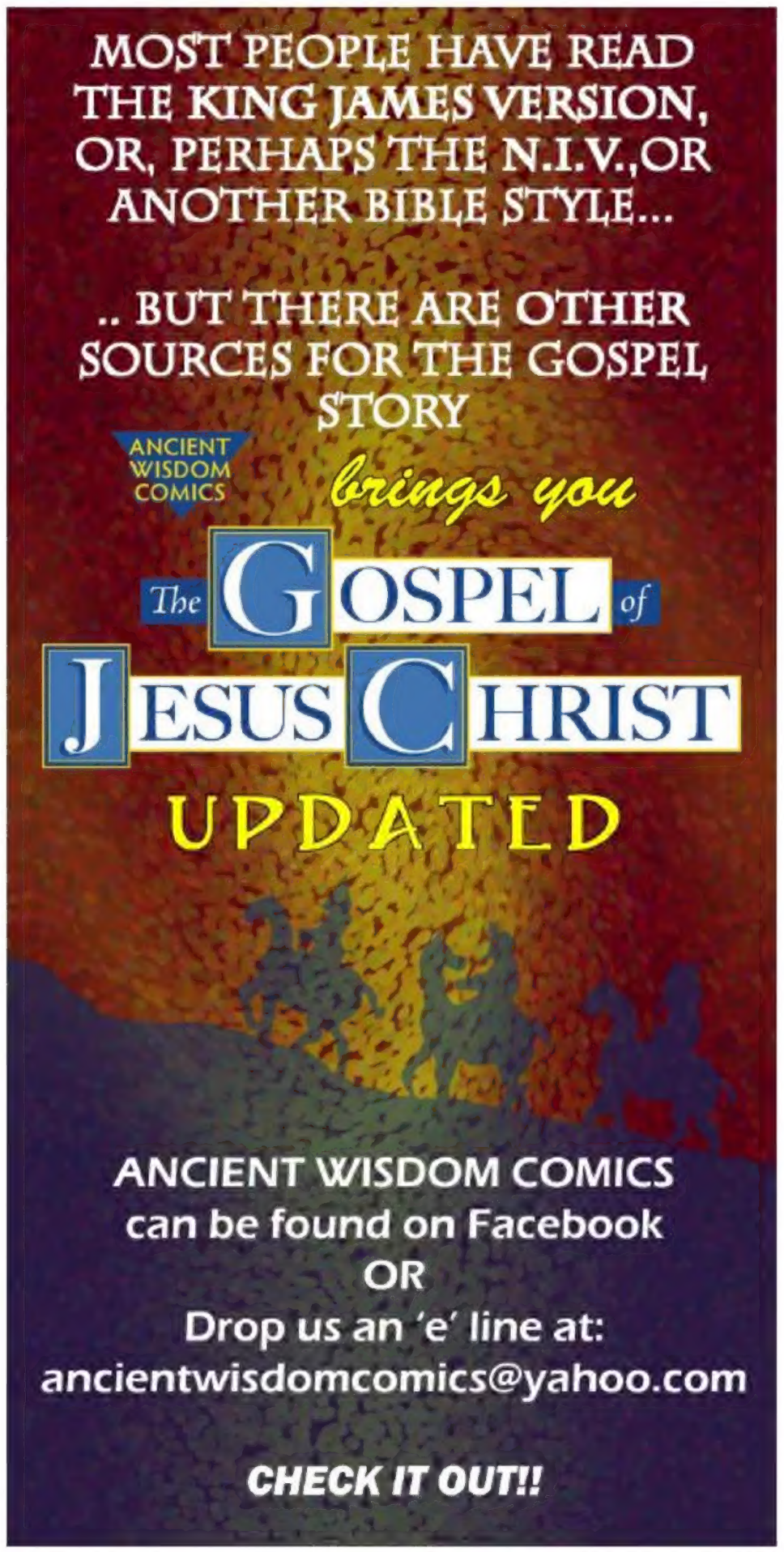
Mixed Feelings #4

64pg Full Size comic, B+W. First Printing, 2011. By Kelly Bono, Jeanie Bryan, Matt Bryan, Joe Bufalo, Jeff Elden, Aaron James Ford, Mike Harvey, Mike McCubbins, Dan Nichols, Devan A. Robinson, Todd Tevlin, Corey Tyson, and Dixon Yimao.

No price in book. The only information we have found about the Urchin Collective, is their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Urchin-Collective-Comics/108024642611356

Review: And so, immediately upon opening this book — before I actually looked at any of the content, mind you — I had mixed feelings. In that respect, they sure delivered.. Let me just say this. If you are taking the time to collect the work of a creative group into a big anthology, take the time to do the following: First, figure out a good price for the package and have it on the cover somewhere. Second, have some way people can contact you about the book, in the book. All books have a publisher; this one's the collective's name, so, while the "about the creators" pages are great, and it's good to be able to contact ALL of the creators, etc, with no info on the publisher, I am stuck with a Facebook page I found by searching. If you want to present the work of a collective… organize your collective a bit better.

Anyway… this issue has a basic Halloween theme, which the cover of the book does nothing to convey, I might add. We run the gamut of styles and levels of development here. We get some good, some that just doesn't connect, and a mishmash of humor, horror, mature reading, and general reading material. So, the content ends up continuing the mixed feelings that were sparked by the packaging. In the end, I'm going to have to say there are better things out there, more worth your time to track down. Maybe some attention to detail in the next one, would go a long way toward making this something that can be seen to present new and young talent, or whatnot. As it stands, it's directionless. —IS


MOST PEOPLE HAVE READ THE KING JAMES VERSION, OR, PERHAPS THE N.I.V.,OR ANOTHER BIBLE STYLE...
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